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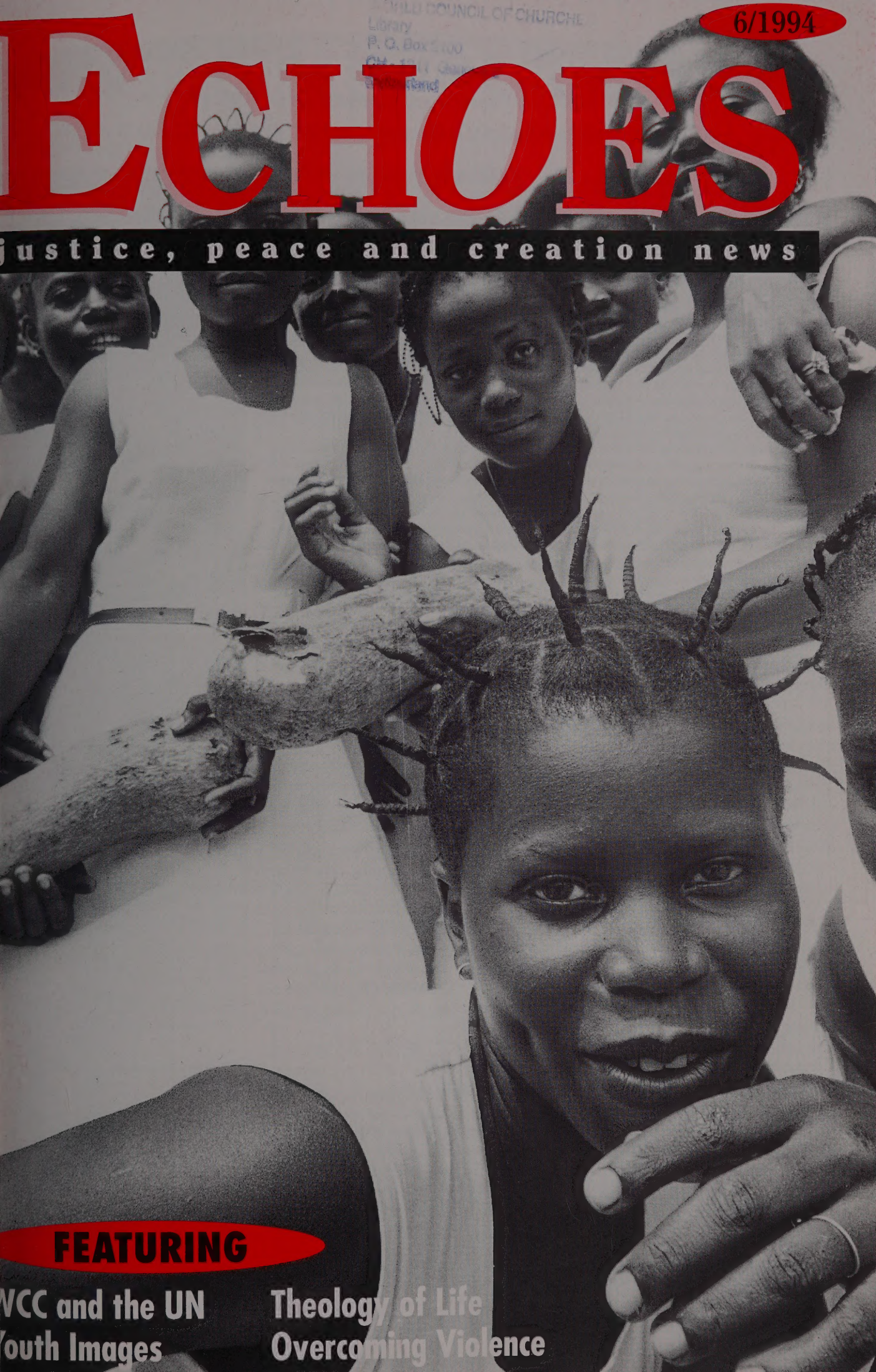
ECHOES

justice, peace and creation news



FEATURING

WCC and the UN

Youth Images

Theology of Life

Overcoming Violence

Echoes From Elsewhere

An Introduction To Echoes Magazine In Reactions, Facts and Issues From All Over The World

USA Still in 1st Place as World Arms Exporter

SIPRI, the Swedish International Peace Research Institute, based in Stockholm, has published its annual ranking of leading arms exporters. Germany has claimed 3rd place for the second successive year, with sales totalling DM3.3 billion, threatening even to overtake a declining Russia, while the United States continues to lead by several lengths in the military hardware race despite a slump in contracts negotiated. As a result of the fall of communism both the superpowers have seen sales decline significantly. Between 1990 and 1992, Russia suffered a spectacular drop from DM15.7 billion to DM3.3 billion. 1992 military sales in fact fell back by 15 per cent compared with 1991. On the other hand, the number of wars across the globe remained constant at 30. Five new conflicts broke out to replace the strife in Ethiopia, El Salvador, Kuwait, Western Sahara and Uganda.

The Arms Exporters Top Ten are

USA	DM13.7 billion
Russia	DM3.3 billion
Germany	DM3.1 billion
China	DM2.5 billion
France	DM1.9 billion
UK	DM1.5 billion
ex-Czechoslovakia	DM1.3 billion
Italy	DM0.5 billion
Holland	DM0.5 billion
Sweden	DM0.2 billion

Defence spending generally represents about 5 per cent of a nation's budget, though in former communist bloc countries it often reached as much as 10 per cent. Compare this with aid spending...

Recommendations and guidelines for the WCC member Churches on Arms Transfers and Proliferation are, among others: "to remodel the "permanent war economy" towards a peace economy consistent with justice and sustainability, and to make the public aware of the likely social and ecological consequences of continued refusal to limit production, transfer and use of modern weapons...." (In The Arms Trade Today, CCIA Background Information, 1993/1)

Ecumenical Institute Bossey

Programme for 1995

- **January and February** Second part of the 43rd session of the Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies: EDUCATION FOR KOINONIA.
- **27 February to 12 March** I WILL MAKE YOU HEAR NEW THINGS. A joint Bossey-WSCF Seminar for Bible Study leaders involved in students' ministry.
- **13-23 April** SEMINAR ON ORTHODOX THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY. A seminar for students, theologians, pastors and lay people.
- **12-21 May** LIMA LITURGY WORKSHOP. A seminar for theologians, liturgists, musicians, artists, etc.
- **23 May to 2 June** WOMEN AND ETHICS. A seminar for women: theologians and lay, lecturers, teachers, researchers, etc.
- **18-27 August** THE AFRICAN CHURCH: SINGING THE LORD'S SONG IN A STRANGE LAND. A seminar for ordained and lay theologians interested in contextual theology and especially on the history of the black American people.
- **15 October 1995 to 28 February 1996** 44th session of the Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies: THEOLOGY FOR LIFE.

For further information please contact the Ecumenical Institute, Château de Bossey (Vaud), 1298 Céligny, Switzerland, telephone (022) 960 9333, telefax: (022) 776 0169

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A Steward Application Form is inserted in the middle of the Magazine.

ERRATUM

We apologize for omitting to credit the cartoon on page 15 of ECHOES no. 2 (1992) to Kees (Sweden).

E d i t o r i a l

Echoes
justice, peace and creation news

Echoes is an occasional publication of the World Council of Churches' Programme Unit III on Justice, Peace and Creation.
It is intended to share information and insights on the concerns of the former WCC sub-units, now in a restructured form in the WCC.
This journal replaces: "Women in a changing world", "Youth", "CCPD: for a change", "Link", "Church and Society Newsletter" and "Forum".

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Articles for future publications are welcome.

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AS YOU FELL A TREE...

Africa, the second largest continent in the world (after Asia), is very diverse and complex in terms of both its human and non-human components, rendering an over-simplification and/or stereotyping of the African way of life somewhat misleading. According to one of the two main and current hypotheses on the origin(s) of modern humans — the so-called "Out of Africa" hypothesis — homo sapiens probably evolved in Southern Africa about 100,00 years ago. Even if this hypothesis cannot yet be proven unequivocally, there seems to be indisputable anthropological evidence that the antiquity of modern-day type of humans in parts of Eastern and Southern Africa goes back to about 90,000 to 100,000 years ago.

The very early human populations in Southern Africa had a very good perception of their environment and the capabilities to derive adequate sustenance from it, as inferred from excavated materials. They must also have been able to respond appropriately to the stress caused by adverse climatic conditions.

Other parts of Africa subsequently populated by humans have, in turn, yielded convincing archaeological evidence which showed that various Indigenous Peoples lived in the same locality for thousands of years, maintaining the environment in an ecologically sustainable state, while adapting or modifying their cultures in response to successive natural environmental changes. The resultant harmony among humans on the one hand, and between them and the rest of the environment on the other, is a basic feature of the Culture of Life. As was testified by Rainforest Action Network (Factsheet 20b 1991:1): "The fact that many rainforest areas still carry a level of species diversity undiminished by human activity is a measure of the sophistication and sensitivity with which traditional cultures related with the forests". Indigenous cultures in other vegetation zones of Africa have a very long history of such "sophistication and sensitivity".

Development can be defined in terms of the ability and capability of a people to: procure sufficient natural resources to meet the basic needs of all, in a self-reliant manner; adjust to adverse environmental changes with minimal disastrous consequences; have a stable, democratic and independent system of government; and, maintain harmony within the human community and between humans and the rest of the environment. Development in Africa, dating back to tens of thousands of years, started to undergo traumatic and major setbacks only in the last few hundred years, owing mainly to unevenly concentrated populations, inter-group conflicts, and devastating invasion by foreign powers and commercial interests, compounded in the last thirty years or so, by corrupt and unpatriotic ruling classes — civilian and military.

The cloud of death and human misery generated by this setback is epitomised by the current unprecedented and incredibly vicious genocide in Rwanda. According to the recent report of the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, 34 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa face the danger of famine and severe food shortage; these scourges are caused by civil strife rather than drought.

However, it needs to be underscored, firstly, that this cloud of death and misery is a very recent phenomenon in Africa and, secondly, by the mercy of God, it is cast over only some parts of the continent — the estimate of FAO referred to above relates to about 7% of the continent's population, for instance. But the sun shines yet even through this cloud as demonstrated by, for example, the heartening resilience, resolve and self-sacrifice of various people in their struggle to have a full life, the inspiring initiative of the Greenbelt Movement to restore and maintain an ecologically sustainable environment, and the wonderful and revolutionary installation of democratic governments in Malawi and South Africa a few months ago.

In the new initiative of Unit III, the Theology of Life, conscious efforts need to be made in order to avoid making, albeit unwittingly, the views, concepts and standards of Europe and North America reference points. Africa, as the continent that has the longest history of human interaction with the environment should not be peripheral

continue on page 4

continued from page 1

Editorial

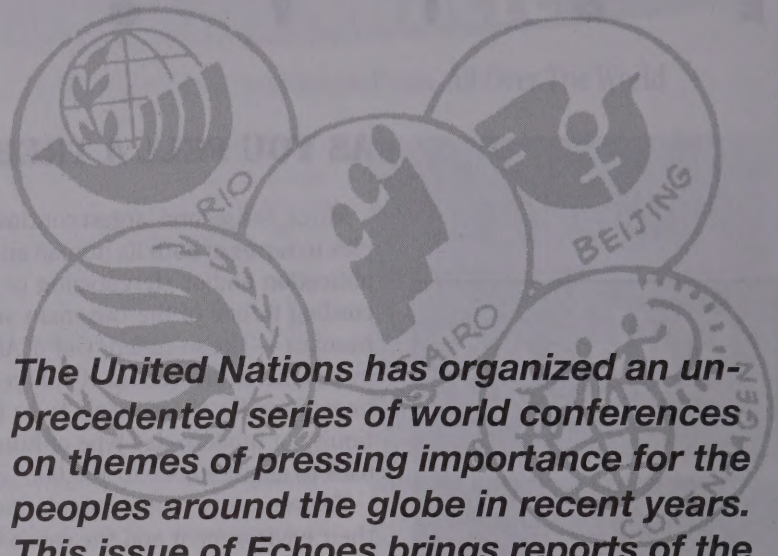
either to our search for and study of how to save humanity from committing ecological suicide, or in our endeavour to fulfil the Creator's original plan and command that humans should be co-creators.

One practical step which we can take now is for the WCC to lead the way by desisting from further usage of terms such as "under-developed", "developing", "third world", and "the South", which are used to describe Africa and some other continents, but which now have become derogatory and negatively value-laden. Such terms imply, erroneously, that development is limited to technological advancement and material prosperity and also amount to inaccurate over-generalisations. Instead, the abbreviation LACAAP, i.e. Latin America, Caribbean, Asia, Africa, Pacific, could be adopted, whenever it is necessary to use a collective term for these regions of the world. I first made this suggestion at a consultation of the WCC's Commission of the Churches on International Affairs on "Disarmament - prospects and problems" held in Geneva in October 1989.

In the current quest for a sustainable future all of us inhabiting this One World are learners. Africans should be encouraged and inspired by the achievements of their ancestors regarding their (ancestors') interaction with the environment. They indeed have a substantial contribution to make to this quest.

A proverb from the Yoruba of Southern Nigeria indeed strongly suggests that maintaining a harmonious relationship with the environment — human and non-human — was part of the Culture and not a fluke, at least among these Nigerians. A free translation of the proverb goes thus: As you fell a tree, put yourself in its position. This implies, inter alia that one must not treat even a non-human, not to talk of a human, component of the environment with mindless, reckless and insensitive abandon, but rather with a great deal of feeling and sense of responsibility; furthermore, the proverb exhorts people to use environmental resources only to meet essential needs and not selfish wants. Does this not remind one of what Jesus said: "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you..."?

Adebisi Sowunmi is a botanist and Professor of Palynology. She teaches environmental archaeology, palaeobotany and palynology at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, where she is the current head of the department of Archaeology and Anthropology.



The United Nations has organized an unprecedented series of world conferences on themes of pressing importance for the peoples around the globe in recent years. This issue of Echoes brings reports of the WCC's engagement with three of these.

The WCC organized a large ecumenical delegation to the World Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), popularly known as the "Earth Summit," in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The churches had considerable influence in shaping "Agenda 21," the global environmental agenda for the 21st century adopted there. David Hallman reviews how the churches are seeking now to promote its implementation.

The World Summit for Social Development, scheduled for Copenhagen, March 1995, provides an opportunity to broaden the global agenda into the next millenium, focusing on poverty, employment and social integration. Rainer Lingscheid tells what is at stake there and describes how the WCC is seeking to put in practice its evolving understanding of ecumenical social ethics as it participates in shaping the Copenhagen program.

Much in the news of late have been the often acrimonious debates which marked the International Conference on Population and Development just concluded in Cairo. Diana Smith gives some of the flavour of that encounter which was attended by a significant ecumenical delegation organized by WCC.

Two more such conferences are worth mentioning in this context. The World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), and the forthcoming Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995). An evaluative report by the ecumenical delegation to the Vienna Conference is available from Unit III. Preparations for a significant ecumenical participation in events surrounding the Beijing Conference are well underway.

The question may well be asked, Is the WCC's agenda now being set by the United Nations? Is too much attention being paid to these world conferences? This is discussed a great deal both within the WCC and in the member churches, given the fact that the record of such conferences in shaping governments' priorities is definitely mixed. At the same time, it can be argued that the convening of such important international forums responds in no small part to the churches' identification of these areas as key to the survival of human communities, and to peace and justice in the world. The question then becomes: How can the churches work to assure that the peoples' agenda is addressed by the diplomats and governmental experts on such occasions? And more important still, How can the churches promote the effective implementation by the governments of the conclusions of such conferences when they correspond to our own priorities?

Unit III: Justice, Peace and Creation, hopes that these articles will inform and stimulate the continuing debate among the churches and church-related movements on these questions, and that you will share your thinking with us.

A QUIET BUT PROPHETIC VOICE AT CAIRO

Back from the International Conference on Population and Development which took place in Cairo, 5-13 September 1994, Diana Smith, one of the staff members in the WCC delegation and a member of WCC's Population Task Force reflects on the experience.

As everyone who reads newspapers, listens to the radio or watches television knows, the Vatican had managed to set the agenda, and to steal the show at Cairo. The discussion was dominated by the abortion debate. And though everyone I spoke to said that it was not what they wanted, it was what was being talked about in the conference halls, in the corridors, and even in our own WCC internal meetings.

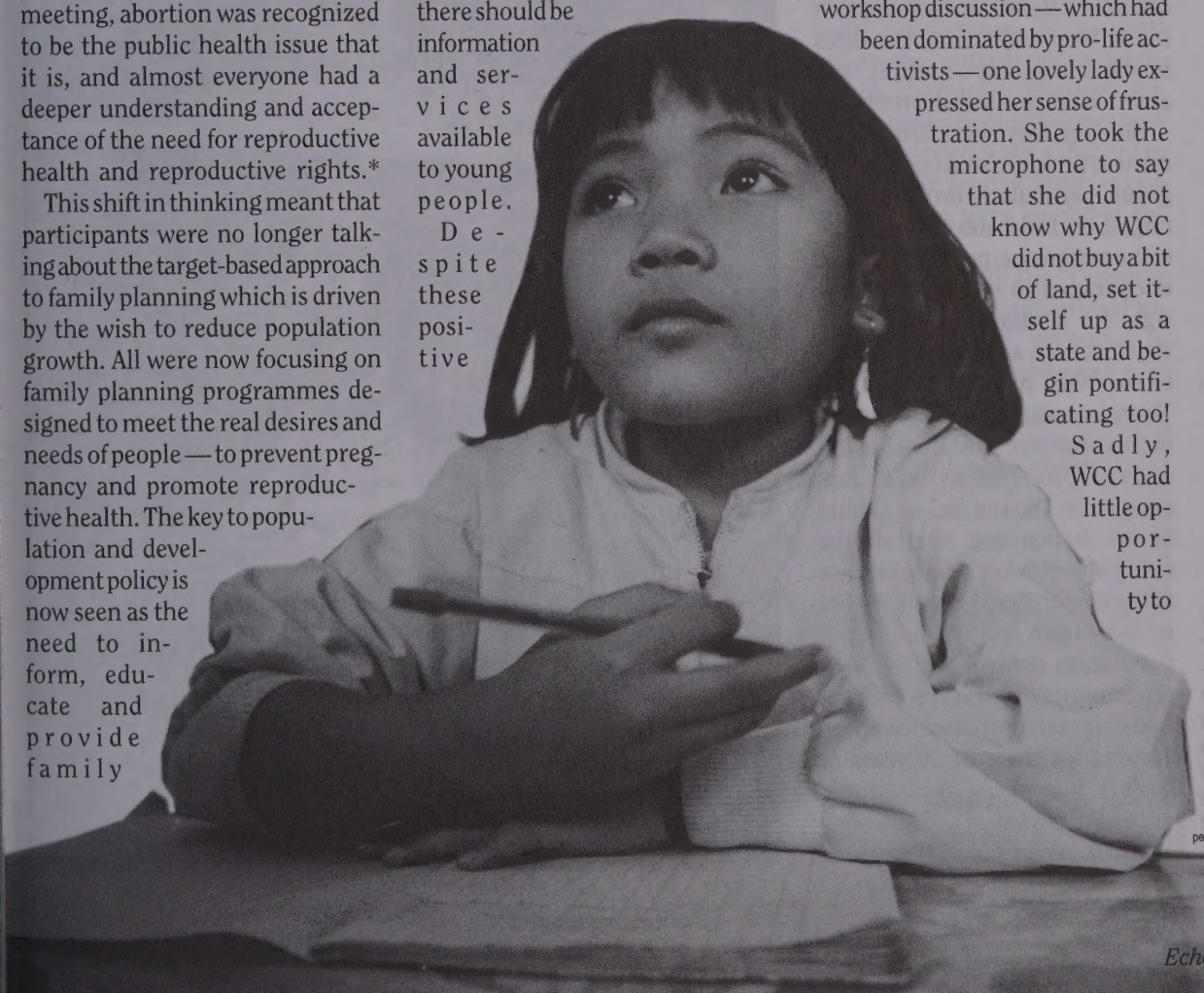
However, the fact that abortion did receive so much discussion may ultimately have turned out to be not such a bad thing. Concentration on the issue led to a shift in policy thinking. By the end of the meeting, abortion was recognized to be the public health issue that it is, and almost everyone had a deeper understanding and acceptance of the need for reproductive health and reproductive rights.*

This shift in thinking meant that participants were no longer talking about the target-based approach to family planning which is driven by the wish to reduce population growth. All were now focusing on family planning programmes designed to meet the real desires and needs of people — to prevent pregnancy and promote reproductive health. The key to population and development policy is now seen as the need to inform, educate and provide family planning services to women, men and young people. There was also a new recognition of the importance of involving women in the design and running of programmes. Gone was the desperate search for new technical fixes, such as new contraceptive methods or new ways to market them.

Adolescent sexuality was also a hotly-debated theme. WCC's Youth Delegation had contributed to an important youth statement which was well-received by the conference. In the end, there was also a certain amount of consensus on the issue as well. The Programme of Action, for example, included a statement recommending that there should be information and services available to young people.

Despite these positive achievements, the concentration on abortion and reproductive rights did not serve WCC well. Although there is considerable agreement on the need for family planning among our 324 church members, opinions on abortion vary. As a delegation, WCC had no policy position on these matters. Certainly, we were no match for the Vatican, nor did we want to be. However, this lack of a position caused a certain sense of frustration. There were many people at the conference who looked to us for strength and wanted us to speak out. While we offered a quiet and important contribution, it was not an easy situation for anyone. During one workshop discussion — which had been dominated by pro-life activists — one lovely lady expressed her sense of frustration. She took the microphone to say that she did not know why WCC did not buy a bit of land, set itself up as a state and begin pontificating too!

Sadly, WCC had little opportunity to



peter williams, wcc

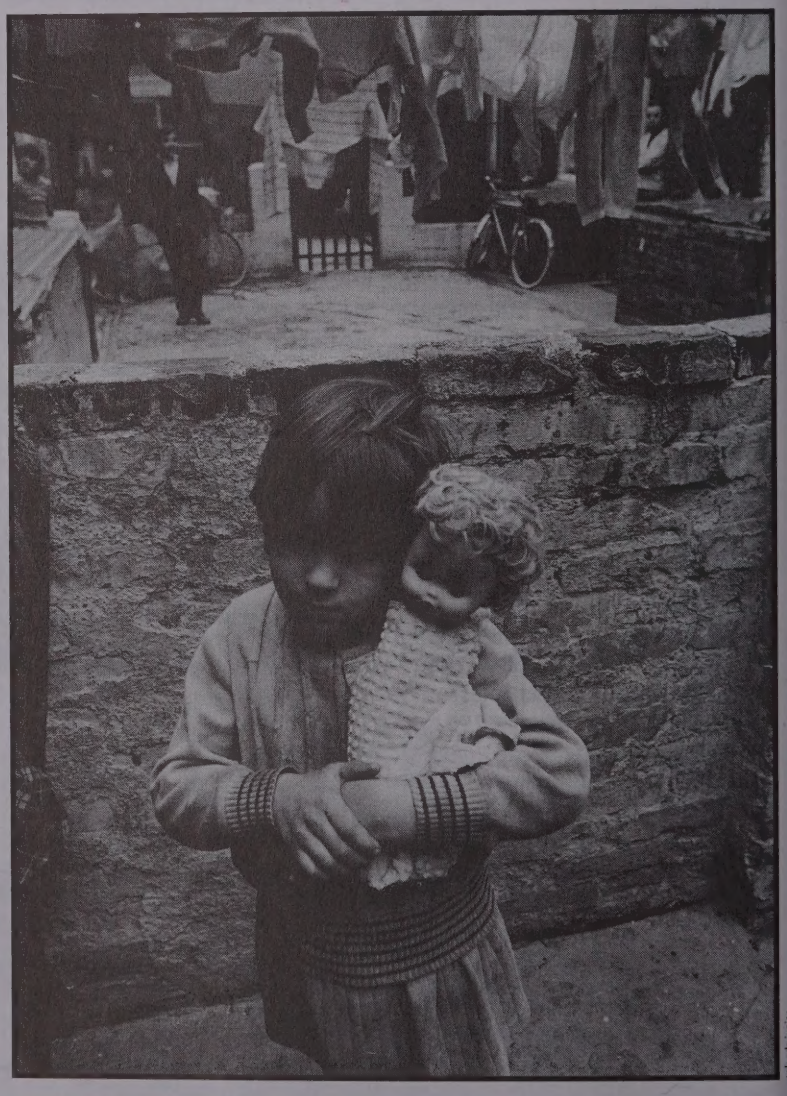
ninan/terra vivia

speak out in the areas in which it is strongest and place greatest priority. We would have like to have created critical debate over the concept of sustainable economic growth. For example, we would have liked to discuss the need for policies which put people — particularly the poor, the vulnerable groups and the marginalised — rather than economic growth at the centre of development strategies. We would have liked more discussion about overconsumption in the West and among the elites in the developing countries, and about environmental problems.

However, there was a strong voice coming through from our migrant group, particularly on family and migration. In debates near the close of the conference, participants were encouraged to contemplate the right for families of migrants to stay together, and this was thanks to the WCC migrant delegation. There was also a growing interest in the concept of "sustainable community" promoted by WCC. And personally, I do not feel we should be too despondent. After all, the policy change which did take place at the conference this year — that is, away from family planning as population control and towards programmes which are people-centred — is exactly what we have been arguing for the past 20 years or more.

Diana G Smith is executive secretary for health learning materials with CMC - Churches' Action for Health, Unit II. She is editor of CMC's publication *"Contact".*

** The following was approved in the final text: Reproductive health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being ... in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes. Reproductive health therefore implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. Implicit in this last condition are the right of men and women to be informed and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice for regulation of fertility which are not against the law.*



With photo: The right for families of migrants to stay together was brought into the discussions thanks to the WCC Migrant delegation.

THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

by Rainer Lingscheid

Convened by the United Nations a World Summit for Social Development, or Social Summit, will be held in Copenhagen, March 6-12, 1995 to look for new directions for social policies and to shape the future of the United Nations' work in the social and economic field.

The Social Summit will deal with three core issues, namely poverty, employment and social integration to promote "higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development with a view to the creation of conditions of stability and well-being" (UN Charter Art. 55).

The meeting will have the opportunity to build on the accomplishments of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development — the so-called "Earth Summit" in Rio de Janeiro, when it was agreed that "human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development" and that preserving the planet for future generations will require nothing less than eradication of poverty, appropriate population policies, the elimination of wasteful patterns of consumption, a supportive and open economic system and the participation of all concerned citizens.

A Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) was established and Juan Somavia, Chilean Ambassador to the UN, was elected as chairman.

During the PrepCom's first substantial session in New York, January 31 - February 11, 1994, it was agreed that the Social Summit should:

- place people's needs at the centre of development;
- secure international, governmental and NGO policies that promote social development and enable the active involvement of all citizens;
- place special priority on the social development needs of the least developed countries;
- attain an appropriate balance between economic efficiency and social justice in growth oriented, equitable and sustainable development environments;
- address creatively the interaction between the social function of the State, market responses to social demands and the imperatives of sustainable development;
- identify common problems of socially marginalised and disadvantaged groups and promote their social integration and attainment of equal opportunities;
- promote legal protection, effective social welfare and education and training for all;
- ensure effective delivery of social services to the disadvantaged;
- mobilise resources for social development at the local, national, regional and international levels;
- recommend effective actions and policies for the UN system in the sphere of social development.

A joint statement of twenty-one non-governmental organisations — including the World Council of Churches (WCC) — mentioned that in order to change the current unjust situation, "new democratic institutional mechanisms and people-centred policies are required. The human, financial, scientific, and technological resources of the planet would be sufficient to satisfy basic human needs everywhere if they were equitably distributed."

But in a draft of the "Outcome of the WSSD: Declaration and Programme of Action" presented to the PrepCom's second session in

gable/cartoonists & writers syndicate

New York, August 22 - September 2, 1994, there were only few proposals for concrete actions and recommendations on a very general level; innovative elements were difficult to identify.

A dynamic NGO Forum will, however, contribute to ensuring that these statements and promises don't gather dust, but are transformed into concrete action

The debate on the draft and a revised version, which was presented during the session illustrated that the dominant perception of development still followed an abstract economic rationale and at the same time was not sufficiently cognizant of social and ecological consequences.

Disappointment and harsh criticism came from the non-governmental organisations, as the new document identified "economic growth as the means to achieve social development. The important connection between political, economic and social factors for sustainable development have been lost as well as the interface of those three areas. Moreover, all the references to unsustainable patterns of consumption and production have been removed. Growth which leads to economic polarisation, however, is subversive of the goals of social development. "Agenda 21" already identified the interrelationship of environmental sustainability and social development and this notion is lost in the revision. We therefore consider the revised document a step backward from the Rio Document.

The revised Programme of Action has omitted the statement that the universal nature of human rights is beyond question thereby re-opening the debate which was concluded in the UN Vienna Conference on Human Rights. We therefore consider the revised document a step backward from the Vienna Document."

In response to the debate the WCC saw the necessity to express an understanding of development which has at its very core the values of economic justice, ecological sustainability, and participatory social and political processes.

These values enable people to participate in their societies, liberate them and lead to authentic development. Economic development was seen only as one of many important dimensions of authentic human development.

In order to negotiate an alternative version of the text of the Declaration Juan Somavia invited several delegations to join a group of "Friends of the Chair". While this type of procedure often generates criticism for its putative lack of transparency, it was effective in generating an acceptable basis for further negotiations. A "Progress Report", which the international community and governments are asked to sign, suggested nine commitments:

1. promoting social progress and enhancing the human condition and giving it the highest priority in national and international policies and efforts;
2. eradicating poverty in the world, in the shortest period possible, by decisive national actions and international cooperation, as a moral and political imperative of humankind;
3. enabling all people to earn livelihoods through freely chosen productive employment, self-employment, and other forms of work;
4. promoting social integration by fostering inclusive, participatory, just, safe and stable societies for all people, requiring the elimination of all forms of discrimination, the sharing of basic values and respect for pluralism and diversity;
5. achieving full equality between men and women and enhancing the contribution of women to social progress and development;
6. promoting the economic, social and human development of Africa and all least developed countries;
7. making structural adjustment programmes socially oriented and non-detrimental to the weakest;
8. generating sufficient resources to achieve the objectives and fulfil the commitments for social development;
9. within the framework of strengthened international cooperation improving the international economic environment and improving international financial assistance.

In general, the WCC welcomed these commitments but still saw the necessity to formulate concrete actions for implementation. It remains to be seen if the negotiations on the Plan of Action in the ongoing preparatory process (during the inter-sessional meetings in October 1994 and during the third session of the PrepCom, January 16-27, 1995) will follow these guidelines and perspectives, and will lead to concrete measures.

The Summit itself will have a plenary exchange of views among governments, NGOs and intergovernmental agencies through panels, hearings, "special events" from March 6-9, 1995. A meeting of Heads of States will follow on March 9 or 10, 1995, and a closing session and adoption of the Summit documents is scheduled for March 12, 1995.

Parallel to the UN Social Summit there will be a NGO Forum in Copenhagen, which will act as an

alternative to the official UN Summit. Non-governmental organisations and Popular organisations from around the world are invited to Copenhagen March 6-12, 1995 to discuss public attitudes to global social development, offering the opportunity for an exchange of views and experiences and a platform for the formulation of a plan of action for the future. The Danish Host Committee for the NGO Forum expects the participation of 2,000 NGO delegations and 10,000 people attending the conference daily.

"Off the ground" is the title of an information paper on the NGO Forum, illustrating what the meeting is about: "Many pious platitudes will be expressed and lofty pledges made during the UN Summit. A dynamic NGO Forum will, however, contribute to ensuring that these statements and promises don't gather dust, but are transformed into concrete action, after the last Summit speech has been given and the last delegate departed for home."

NGOs hope that the Summit will figure out the elements of a new paradigm of development, leading to peace, sustainability and justice, and will meet the strategic structural issues such as:

- to change the current focus on economic growth as the engine of development;
- to define development goals in light of the limits that ecology sets to consumption;
- to develop ways of accounting social and ecological costs in determining the true costs of production and consumption;
- to seek transparency and accountability in national and international agreements;
- to enlarge popular participation and representation of civil society institutions;
- to achieve greater equity in terms of trade;
- to monitor and regulate transnational capital flows, financial speculation and transnational corporations:
- to articulate the social and cultural dimensions of the enabling environment essential for person-centred development.

Hence there remains the need for a philosophical approach to the Summit, which would take into consideration what the Experts' Group Meeting on Poverty stated: "There is a need to re-establish broadly participatory political cultures with commitments to common ethical principles and values and an understanding of development as a political process."

Would it be too utopian to look for a rebirth of the spiritual and moral basis of the common future, the renewal of the notions of service and community, a new political philosophy of the relations between individuals, institutions, the State, and the international community?

The WSSD-Secretariat prepared a seminar on "Ethical and Spiritual Dimensions of Social Progress" in Ljubljana at the end of October 1994 to clarify and highlight the ethical and spiritual dimensions of social development, to identify common moral and spiritual values which could constitute the basis of the message of Copenhagen, to provide the Summit and its follow-up with ideas to think about and debate the basic values that underlie "the fabrics of our societies" and to open the way for a more holistic approach to issues of development, social progress and co-operation in which the cultural, ethical and spiritual facets of life and society would be integrated.

The United Nations could not elaborate a universal moral code or a common metaphysics, but the political debate could be rooted on as fertile and rich cultural, ethical and spiritual soil as possible.

In a recent statement the WCC mentioned that there is a need for a "political ethics", asking how human beings can become subjects of their history, and how they can promote the conditions of freedom, the key elements of which are common material good, political competence and cultural self-determination: "Political ethics has the goal of re-establishing the primacy of politics over inherent economic necessities."

Since the WCC has the hope that the spirit of God will awaken God's people and will transform the power of oppression into a creative and productive power leading to sustainable peace and justice, the WCC will contribute to the Summit by presenting its member churches' experience in development cooperation and their attempt to practise ecumenical political ethics.

As a relevant element of the follow-up of the Social Summit the WCC should call the member churches — who are important actors within civil societies — to monitor if and how national governments, UN agencies and NGOs implement the recommendations of Copenhagen.

There is already the idea of having another "Social Summit" in the year 2000 — so the Copenhagen event might be seen as the beginning of global thinking and global action on issues of organisation of societies. It could represent the first step towards a world citizenship.

THE EARTH SUMMIT CONTINUES

THE WCC'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE UN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

by David G. Hallman

The UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) is the principal body within the UN system to follow-up the agreements made at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. It meets yearly, and at its inaugural meeting in June 1993, and again in May 1994, the World Council of Churches had delegations of representatives from Africa, Asia, East and West Europe, Latin America, North America. Their main task was to raise — together with other NGOs, government delegates and UN officials — the justice, peace and integrity of creation dimensions of the issues under discussion.

Concerns about "sustainable development" are not new to the churches. Though falteringly, Christian churches (and other faiths) have historically helped to preserve creation and provide health, security and community for their societies.

WCC CHURCHES LED THE WAY

The WCC did much to articulate the concept through the 70s and 80s for a "just, participatory and sustainable society". The 1983 Vancouver Assembly agreed that churches should cooperate in the conciliar process for "justice, peace and integrity of creation" (JPIC). The range of issues addressed through these programmes spans most of the concerns that fall under sustainable development but, even more importantly, the churches have focused on their inter-relationship.

The concern, now expressed in the UNCED process, to link environment and development is thus familiar territory to the churches. The churches have often provided valuable conceptual and ethical tools to governments and civil society alike, to help understand the inextricable linkages that bind social justice and ecological protection for the whole of creation.

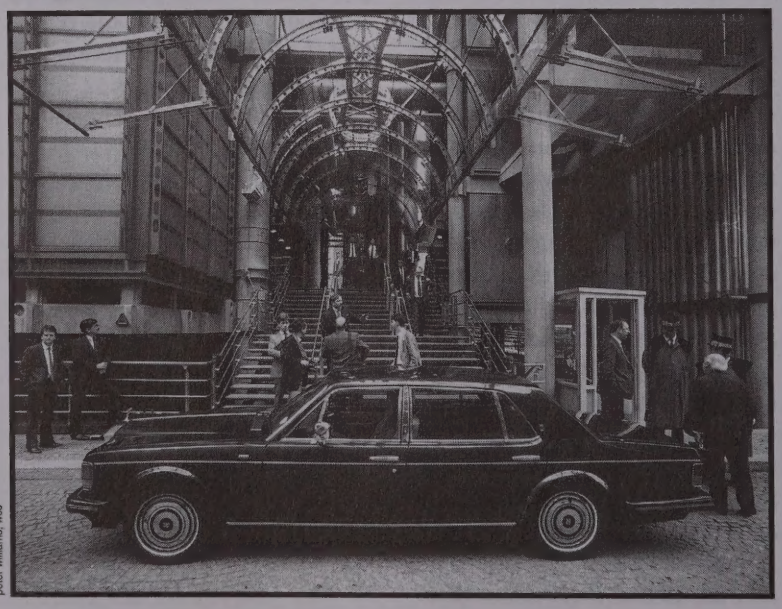
It was thus appropriate that the churches should participate in the meetings of the CSD. Its first session in 1993 concentrated mainly on organisational issues; the second session in 1994 began reviewing a cluster of thematic issues as well as cross-cutting issues.

MAIN TASKS

The CSD's major task is to review progress on implementing Agenda 21. Agenda 21, the massive 800 page blueprint for how to make development socially, economically and environmentally sustainable, was negotiated during the preparatory committee meetings prior to Rio and at UNCED itself. The CSD reviews the 40 chapters of Agenda 21 on a rotating basis over three year cycles and negotiates implementation strategies. In 1994, the focus was on health, human settlements, freshwater, toxic chemicals, and hazardous wastes as well as on-going issues such as finance and technology co-operation. In 1995, the focus will be on land, desertification, forests and biodiversity.

But the CSD is not just a once-a-year meeting. The UN system, in conjunction with governments, non-governmental organisations, business and other major groups, is active in many different ways trying to implement the directions agreed at UNCED. Annual sessions provide an opportunity to assess the progress being made and negotiate agreements on new strategies for implementation. There are also inter-sessional meetings during the year as well as particular events sponsored by one or more

CULTURE OF CONSUMPTION ...



peter williams, wcc

RURAL CHRISTIAN YOUTH IN INDIA

Everyone knows of the huge Indian population. Not many know that nearly 1/5 of them are Dalit; some still call them by the derogatory name "untouchable". Over 70% of the Christian population is Dalit — a percentage certainly not represented in church leadership. In general, the churches in India have done very little to support the emerging Dalit movements.

The WCC has responded with the establishment of the Dalit Solidarity Programme, bringing together Dalits from Sikh, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim and Hindu communities.

Within the Indian political scene, the Dalit have become an important voting factor — which means their political power is likely to increase. Rev. Manchala Deenabandhu has sent us a report from the first Rural Christian Youth Camp of Dalit young people.

One of the main aims of the camps was to impress on the churches in India the need to reset their priorities and help the organisation and mobilisation of Dalit youth.

Reverend Manchala Deenabandhu teaches at the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College in Kilpauk (Madras). He accepted to be involved in the Theology of Life Programme of UnitIII/WCC as local coordinator of a case study on the second affirmation of the World Convocation on Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (1990, Seoul): ***God's option for the poor.***

The process will begin with a study of responses of a cluster of Madras based institutions to the particular affirmation both historically and at present.

As a second step, the case study group will bring together the richness of insights, affirmations and reflections from the poor themselves, concerned people, movements and churches for an articulation of a theology of life from the Indian experience. There will be;

- A meeting each for the Church leaders and peoples movements and development organisations;
- Visits by small groups to places such as Narmada Dam, Tribal areas such as Orissa and Bihar and to other important places where the churches and movements have responded to the affirmation in significant ways;
- Interviews with people in

rural/tribal situations and with grass roots level workers and some leading Christian thinkers
- Exchange visit between India and Germany, where another group is also testing the affirmation.

The group will gather up and study the findings to draft a final report.

Youth Camps

Poverty, untouchability, low wages, bonded labour, atrocities, etc., were not issues of intellectual reflection but themes of the stories shared by the participants of the two rural Christian youth camps that took place in a sea-side fishing village near Chirala and in a small town Peddapuram in Andhra Pradesh during May 1994. Although small and seemingly inconsequential, these two week-long events were the first ever to have been attempted exclusively for the rural Christian youth, on their life issues and in their own style.

These pioneering events are historic in their own way. These have been attempted with the conviction that the constituency of Christian youth work in India needs to be rural rather than urban as presently pursued by the churches and youth organisations. Moreover, the Indian church itself is primarily a rural church and attempts of this sort could lead to an authentic self-discovery of the church itself. A small group of concerned young people initiated these two events as an experiment with the sponsorship of a few ecumenical organisations and these were hosted by the Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church (AELC). The organising team hopes to attempt similar gatherings in about fifteen places in different parts of the country during 1995.

Most of them who came were young farm labourers and the rest were educated unemployed and school dropouts. They were Christian Dalits belonging to the South Andhra Lutheran Church, the Baptist Church, the church of South India, and the Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church. For most of the fifty young people it was the first time to have attended events of this kind outside their villages. It was reported that not many could come because that would mean losing their wages for a week, and cultural inhibitions hindered the participation of many young women. But for those who were present, it was a unique experience of learning through sharing and reflection on common issues and experiences of the rural poor. They read the Bible and reflected together in an effort to find new meanings and directions in their struggle for a just society. In their familiar language —Telugu, they interacted with some social activists on issues such as rural dynamics, economy, unemployment, illiteracy, legal rights, panchayat system, Dalit and women's oppression, etc.

The lengthy discussions that ensued were characterised by anger, frustration and determination. The role plays, skits, songs and poems that the participants attempted, gave expression to their firm resolve to work towards the development of their communities back home. Their rural realities of poverty, ignorance, suffering, shame and deprivation were the content of their prayers, worship, testimonies and reflections. A spirit of solidarity and commonness of purpose were the outcome of these events. All of them affirmed their determination to form rural Christian youth movements in their respective villages as a first step towards their involvement in the struggles of their people.

The following is the summary of their discussions and resolutions:

At these camps, we have read and reflected together on the Bible. We realise that the bible is all about our stories and our struggles for justice and freedom. We also realise that the God of the Bible is one who always responded to the cries of the poor and the oppressed (eg. the slain Abel, Uriah and Naboth, the oppressed slaves in Egypt, etc.) Such a realisation gives us courage and hope.

We realise that some are rich because we are poor. Our lands have been taken away. We are treated as less than humans. We are denied education, employment, health and housing. We are made poor and kept poor. We are told that we are a worthless people. Therefore, we are poor, not because of our past or present sins, nor our laziness, but because it suits the interests of the powerful.

Therefore we believe that in the reign of God to come, life, justice, health, opportunities, freedom and hope are abundantly available to all people (eg. Isaiah 65:17-25). It becomes a reality whenever or wherever a society is guided by the values of God's reign — of justice, equality, sharing and love. These are spiritual and moral choices that one needs to make to be a part of God's reign.

The task for us, therefore, is to obey God who wills the liberation of the oppressed and who calls and empowers people to "effect alternatives" (Jeremiah 1:10) to all unjust and inhuman structures and systems like caste, class, patriarchy, pro-rich economy and ensures power to the powerless as has been willed (Luke 1:52; Luke 6:20-25).

Therefore, we believe that Christ did not come to establish the Christian religion but to herald God's reign. It can only come when the poor are empowered, the blind and ignorant masses are able to see, the socially and economically disabled people are able to exercise their full human potential and the despised are received and treated as human beings (Luke 7:22).

The Gospel, then for us, is good news because it proclaims libera-

tion from all that enslaves us and hope of a dignified human life.

Such an understanding of salvation makes us believe that sin is much more than the individual violation of certain norms and values. It is also social and systemic. We identify passive acceptance of injustice, indifference, insensitivity, selfishness, greed and abuse of power and freedom as sins which keep us in perpetual bondage.

It was these sins that Jesus condemned and had the courage to do so. Therefore, following Christ is to have courage to be obedient (Phil. 2:1-21) and Christian spirituality is one that prepares us for active participation rather than that which benumbs us with passive expectation.

We realise that by and large, the teaching and preaching of the church is always about loyalty to the church and the salvation of the soul but hardly anything about our poverty, shame and injustice. We expect our pastors to tell us also about the need to struggle for justice and to inculcate new values for a dignified life.

We also realise that we Dalits need to develop self-esteem and confidence to build our lives on our own and to take up challenges. We believe that our liberation and restoration is God's will and that God would certainly empower anyone who takes up that cause (eg. Moses, Jeremiah). God's reign is for the poor and for those who struggle for justice (Luke 6:20-25). Therefore, we must overcome cynicism and lack of self-esteem and confidence (which hindered Philip) and must look for opportunities of creative responses and solutions (like Andrew in John 6:5-14).

A group session at Peddapuram Camp

All of us here are Christian Dalits. We are the poorest and the most deprived lot among the rural poor. We not only share the misery and discrimination with our fellow Dalits, but are also deprived of all sources of development like welfare schemes, loans, subsidies and reservations. Driven by acute economic compulsions some of us are forced to convert to Hinduism to avail the constitutional guaranteed benefits.

We are school and college dropouts. We are not able to study further due to our abject poverty and hard circumstances. While remaining as unorganised farm labourers, we are not able to fight unitedly for just wages. We, as young people, realise the implications of this injustice, the dominant of which is perpetual slavery and poverty, and resolve to fight for just wages by organising ourselves, educating our fellow villagers and fostering a spirit of solidarity.

Illiteracy continues to be the main perpetuator of rural poverty. Due to a high rate of illiteracy among us, ignorance and superstition take their toll. Many opportunities are ignored. Many atrocities are unreported and the desire to fight poverty and exploitation is not infused. Therefore, all Dalit young women and men must take up the task of "each one teaching one". Night schools can be run for those who cannot spare their day time.

The rural wealth and resources are in the hands of the big landlords who through their political clout remain unaffected by the Land Ceiling Act. Ownership of the land should be given to those who till the land. To that extent, youth should actively get involved in impressing upon the government to implement the land reforms.

We also identify the possibility of forming "village funds" by the Dalits themselves to attend to the urgent financial needs of the families. This would minimise the tendency to depend on the landlords which often results in bonded labour and loss of small landholdings.

Our communities must also realise the positive aspects of the cooperative movement for community development and self-employment. This seems necessary in view of the fact of the commercialisation of agriculture and our inability to purchase jobs at any level. We must utilise the panchayats to have access to resources to set up community development projects.

Technical or vocational education must be given preference over degree oriented education. The educated youth must help in coaching those who appear for exami-

nations.

While we strongly affirm that our poverty is due to caste system and unjust accumulation of wealth, we emphasise that the rural communities must realise the manageability and viability of small families and must take to family planning methods.

Children taking to work at a very young age is a common thing among our communities. True, large families and dire economic reasons play a major role. But we also take note of the cynicism and lack of motivation among the parents as equally important causes. Youth have a major role to play as motivators in this regard.

The most oppressive forms of patriarchy are to be found in our villages. Unfortunately, we Dalits too have come to imitate the value systems of our oppressors. We believe all young men must go through a moral transformation and must realise and honour the humanity of the women. Youth must support and help the harassed and abused women and also take up the task of promoting human equality as a priority.

Disunity among Dalits has always been to the advantage of our common oppressors and a serious obstacle in fighting for justice and dignity. Youth must rise above these sub-caste loyalties and forge unity among the Dalits. As victims of the caste system, we cannot allow casteim to flourish among us. We also realise that denominational loyalties are irrelevant and cumbersome for our progress and justice.

Christian Youth must align themselves actively with the Ambedkar Movement and other such initiatives to fight for the rights and interests of the rural poor. They can generate socio-political awareness among people through street plays, songs, reading rooms and informal discussions.

There is an urgent need to provide basic awareness about the governmental acts against bonded labour, dowry, child marriages, child labour, untouchability, tenancy rights, land reforms, minimum wages, and atrocities against Dalits and women. Youth must become aware of these in order to keep the communities vigilant about possible violations.

Many rural Dalit communities are not aware of the opportunities and provisions offered by the government and voluntary agencies. Youth must be channels of communication as well as the task force to ensure that the concerned people implement them in true spirit.

This experience of living and sharing together has opened our eyes to new possibilities and hence, we appeal:

- The church to play a major role in equipping and empowering the rural masses for development and to channel all ministries to the rural poor.
- That this initiative be sustained and expanded to mobilise more rural Christian young people. Similar events may be organised in more places and with larger participation. Some camps may be organised exclusively for young women.
- That we need to be informed about news and opportunities and encouraged through correspondence and newsletters by the organising team.

We resolve to start youth movements in our villages in order to play a constructive role in the life of our communities. We identify two immediate tasks: one is, to work for the solidarity and unity of the poor, especially the Dalits to overcome sub-caste rivalries and prejudices, and the second, is to take up the literacy and education of our people because we realise knowledge, self-confidence and self-esteem are important for the success of any people's action and development process.

WCC STEWARDS

by Anu Talvivaara

"The feeling was unexplainable. It was like travelling around the world in two weeks, meeting people, sharing their cultures, joys and concerns. It brought me to the realization that we do indeed live in a global community." These are the words of one of almost 1000 young people who have participated in the Stewards Programme of Unit III Youth Team in the past decade. In this article we want to take a closer look at this interesting programme.

The Stewards Programme is a major endeavour within the youth work of Unit III. It contributes significantly to the functions of the Youth Team which are to equip and support young people as they respond to their situations, to bring the challenge of young people into the life of the ecumenical movement and the WCC, and to develop ecumenical leadership. A Steward is a young person who commits time, energy and vision to build up the ecumenical movement in all of its aspects — churches, peoples movements and ecumenical

peter williams, wcc

Stewards team in South Africa, 1994

youth movements.

There have been stewards ever since the WCC was founded in 1948 and major meetings such as Assemblies, Central Committees, etc. were started. The idea initiated from the practical needs in the administration of the meetings and young people known to the organisers were requested to help. These young women and men were called "stewards" as they were serving the event. It became a tradition to have some 40-50 young people as stewards in each big meeting and in a few years the stewards were not only local young people but also some enthusiastic ecumenically minded travellers from further away.

The stewards came to work in the meeting but also to meet each other in the ecumenical context and to build bridges between denominations and nationalities. They organised their own programmes during their free time, and covered the travel expenses. They were an important, but not really institutionally recognised, group as it is only in the report of the August 1969 Central Committee meeting that stewards are for the first time included by their names in the list of participants. This late recognition was probably not because their services were not appreciated but rather an administrative oversight which is unfortunate for the historical records.

It was already attempted in 1970s to make the Stewards Programme an intentional experience of ecumenical learning which would build up the ecumenical youth movement . However, the real progress came only after the Sixth Assembly in Vancouver 1983 when certain key issues were addressed and agreed upon. The most important addition was that, since 1988, a line covering the travel subsidies for stewards as well as the expenses for the pre-meeting was to be included in the budget of the Central Committee and other major global meetings. Prior to this, it had been necessary to seek support to subsidise the travel of the stewards. The impact of this change was obvious. Firstly, the application process became open and selection was based on the quality of each application, prioritising ecumenical involvement as well as the capacity to perform the tasks of stewardship. Secondly, regional representation became fairer as there was a decline in the number of European stewards who had, in one way or another, available funds and there was therefore an increase in the number of stewards from other regions for whom travel without subsidy had been impossible.

Presently the Stewards Programme has developed to include three major aspects. It is designed to build ecumenical consciousness and global solidarity. It enables the participation and presence of young people at major meetings of the WCC as yeast of the ecumenical loaf and finally it supports the smooth running of the meetings and gives them experience on how the international meeting ma-

chinery works – or doesn't work. The programme is organised in three parts. It begins with a five-day exposure to the local realities of young people in the country or in the region where the meeting is taking place. The exposure is followed by an orientation which seeks to develop ecumenical leadership skills during three days. The third part is the working period including the time to follow the discussions of the meeting.

Stewards selection has become fairly competitive. It is done therefore on the basis of detailed application forms and recommendations from churches, ecumenical partner bodies at national and regional levels and regional WCC staff task forces. For example, while writing this article, the selection process for September 1995 programme is at its final stages and the interesting but ungrateful duty of the WCC staff group, composed of representatives of all the Programme Units and General Secretariat, is to select 45 stewards from almost 400 applicants. Each application is viewed and the balance of confession, gender, region and race is actively sought. Whenever there is to be a new programme, the application form is published in this journal in the same fashion as in this issue for the Central Committee meeting in 1996. In addition to this, the form is also distributed to all member churches and partner organizations.

What does this programme then look like? Mr Jim Hodgson, Associate General Secretary for Ecumenical Education and Communication, Canadian Council of Churches, also serving as the Regional Youth Secretary for Canada, worked as a coordinator of the Stewards Programme at the Ecumenical Global Gathering of Youth and Students (EGGYS) held in Brazil in July 1993. He writes of his experience:

"The Stewards Programme can be quite large: in Canberra, for the 1991 Assembly of the WCC, there were about 175 stewards from 84 countries. At EGGYS, we were a smaller group: twelve of the 32 stewards were Brazilian youth and young adults, and the rest came from abroad. Like the 500 other EGGYS participants, stewards struggled to learn as they worked across the barriers of culture, language and religion. In Brazil the stewards ran the information desk, distributed translation equipment, helped with documentation and supported the teams of people who planned the plenaries, forums, bible studies and liturgies. Stewards were readily identifiable by their yellow badges, and always seemed to be moving chairs and desks from one part of the site to another at all hours of the day or night. It took a certain kind of discipline to close down our support for these activities and to insist that stewards too have the time to make friends and reflect on what was going on around them.

"The feeling was unexplainable. It was like travelling around the world in two weeks, meeting people, sharing their cultures, joys and concerns. It brought me to the realization that we do indeed live in a global community."

While EGGYS marked the first time I had worked directly with the Stewards Programme, my four-years-plus at the Canadian Council of Churches has given me several opportunities to examine the programme. I have been involved in the preparation and debriefing of stewards, and see the direct benefits to the ecumenical movement in Canada of the Stewards Programme as an ecumenical learning project. When I came on staff, there were rumblings and unhappiness among Canadian churches, which are members of the WCC, about being asked to pay travel costs for stewards in whose selection they played no part. We eventually reached an agreement under which the CCC Youth Working Group consults with the WCC member churches and then recommends a list of Canadians to the WCC which in turn makes its selections from the list. The Canadian model may be helpful to other churches, regional ecumenical organizations and to the WCC itself in that it ensures that stewards are active in their contexts.

As stewards, hard work is combined with a rich ecumenical learning experience which can be shared with other young people when stewards return home. Frequently, during EGGYS, I remembered the "Principles for Ecumenical Learning," defined in 1989 by the WCC Sub-Unit on Education: "Ecumenical learning is a process by which:

- diverse groups and individuals
- well-rooted in their own faith, traditions cultures and contexts
- are enabled to risk honest encounters with one another before God
- as they study and struggle together in community
- with personally relevant issues
- in light of the scriptures, the traditions of their faith, worship and global realities
- resulting in communal action in faithfulness to God's intention of the unity of the church and humankind, and for justice, peace and the integrity of creation."

Jim's experience could be applied

to the experience of most people who have participated in one way or another in the Stewards Programme. So could the following words by a steward who participated in a recent programme: "Actually working in the WCC meeting brought new meaning of ecumenism to me. It gave me a broader view of the world with its many problems, thus provoking me into greater action. This opportunity has widened my perspective of the world, and has meant experiencing a lot of love, joy and pain, which have changed and continue to change how I look at things in my life."

What follows are two reflections written by stewards who had the opportunity to participate in the exposure part of the Stewards Programme organised in January 1994 in South Africa. Mr Shawn Ingraham from the Bahamas was part of a group which visited rural areas in Northern Transvaal. Ms Kerstin Weniger from Germany joined the group which spent some time in the urban environment of Johannesburg.

Ms Anu Talvivaara, from Finland, is the Executive Secretary of the Youth Team of Unit III and is responsible for the Stewards Programme.

STEWARDS' EXPOSURE PROGRAMME 1994

You cannot act unless you feel, you cannot feel unless you know, you cannot know unless you've been there. A Bahamian, a Zimbabwean, a Tobagon, an American, an Austrian, a Brazilian and an Australian, led by Shadrach (a Black South African) had the privilege of experiencing first hand the frustrations, uncertainty, misery and poverty of Black South Africans in the Northern Transvaal in rural South Africa. It was to this group of eight people that, through it's stewards programme, the World Council of Churches gave the opportunity to be exposed to the evil effects on the lives of a people that are oppressed by apartheid. The programme lasted for four days, travelling for over three thousand kilometres in the back of a small bakkie (truck).

You cannot act unless you feel, you cannot feel unless you know, you cannot know unless you've been there.

The sights and stories have been etched in our consciousness and can never be fully translated without omitting some very important aspects of these people and their struggle for survival. To know, one had to be there and experience a lot of feelings that just cannot be translated into words. Not even the mass media can translate fully what these people go through from day to day.

Yet the attempt must be made, because we feel as though we have left with an obligation to the people of Lebowa to get involved in helping others from our countries and the WCC to act on their behalf.

The injustices, the danger, the poverty all gave rise to a hope and optimism that many of us have never witnessed before in our own comfortable countries. It was so refined that it almost makes one envious of their struggle.

Shadrach, our guide and soon to be good friend, explained and translated what we sometimes found difficult to comprehend or understand. Being of the struggle himself, he was certain that we felt a lot of what is really happening in South Africa and what has happened. He was one of the Black South Africans that have been attacked by Whites and has not been able to seek justice. He too has spent nights in prison cells, not being able to get

Photo on this page: Rural study group in Northern Transvaal

messages to his family as to his whereabouts or safety.

The only tools and resources that some of the dwellers in the Homelands have is the will and determination to survive. This has given rise to projects such as the one in Lenyenye where the local people are running a Community Centre to help improve their standard of living. This Centre was started by a Black nurse who was put under house arrest; she saw that the people were suffering without chance of survival and established a clinic, a kindergarten and preschool, and then self sufficiency projects such as brick making.

We found this a well thought out project. Despite the limitations and hardships experienced by these people, they continue to strive and to be of service to the various committees benefiting from their services.

The district of Mafefe (another homeland) at first sight seems like a deserted wasteland. How the remaining inhabitants survive is yet another mystery. The tragic side effects from the asbestos mining plant which had been closed in Mafefe include contamination of rivers where children still play and animals drink, giving rise to asbestos-related diseases. A struggling small group of people here, without any resources, try to educate their people to the dangers of the asbestos and also try to get compensation from the asbestos company. When we were leaving this area they insisted on dancing and singing for us their motivating song that has three words "unity is power".

Not until we went into rural South Africa did we realize what a luxury education is. At Sekhukune there is a group of young adults running the Thushanang Study project. This project was formed in 1986, to enable young Black South Africans to have a chance to study up to nine subjects in small groups. Again with few resources this project has been able to help over one thousand students, some are now able to help others. It motivated us as young people to become a part of community building not only in church, but in the community of Christ as well.

Lions running away with children in their mouths, the lack of fresh water and once per month food rations is a way of life for these people...

Probably the most heart wrenching, soul searching experience for us was a visit to Lulekani, a refugee camp, run by the South African Council of Churches. This is a place where one finds it very difficult to raise one's camera to take photos of this misery. People here immediately beg for help and just the sight of them softens the hardest hearts. Children playing in muddy streets and yards, mothers allowing flies to share their meal of worms with them. New arrivals lying on cardboard or sometimes on the bare ground, exhausted from their treacherous journey across the Mozambique/South African border, where sometimes they are eaten by wild animals from the Kruger Game Park. Lions running away with children in their mouths, the lack of fresh water and once per month food rations, is a way of life for these people. This camp serves as a beacon of hope for the poverty stricken homelands and the Northern Transvaal, where people share drinking water with their cattle, where mother nature has forgotten to distribute her soil equally, where one's life cannot be planned, but just happens.

The plight of these people is so dire that we felt handicapped when each group of people asked us why we were coming to their homelands or what we could offer them. It seems ironic but we were the ones who benefited from the visits. Instead of seeing a people without hope, giving up on life, we saw a group of people filled with hope and a passion for unity; a people who have not lost heart but have grown from strength to strength. The biggest piece of truth that they have is that on April 27th, 1994, their physical liberation joined their mental liberation.

We knew we had to go in order to know; to let Black South Africa know that they have the total support of the WCC, which had sent us with a message of Solidarity.

Shawn Ingraham, from the Bahamas.

As I enjoy my second summer for this year, back home in Europe, I often think with gratitude of the first — three weeks in January which I was fortunate enough to spend in South Africa, as a participant in the Stewards Programme linked to the WCC Central Committee Meeting in Johannesburg. Some 40 young people from all over the world took part in the programme, just before and during the WCC Meeting. I myself was part of a small group that arrived one week earlier to participate in the exposure programme.

After a ten-hour flight, landing at Jan Smuts Airport — passport control, luggage reclaim, then the hustle and bustle of the arrival hall. Khepi from the South African Council of Churches (SACC) came to fetch us. We travelled by minibus along six-lane highways into town,

which was sweltering hushed and deserted under the Sunday afternoon sun. We were struck by the countless high walls, barbed-wire fences, barred windows and doors — the calm suddenly seemed deceptive. At the entrance to the SACC building our bags were x-rayed, as in an airport. Our hosts were protecting themselves against bomb attacks, a frequent occurrence here, with the SACC itself having been targeted three years ago. Once upstairs in Khepi's office, the mood became more relaxed as he showed us to the phone and we called home to let them know we had arrived safely — one of countless kindnesses that would accompany us in the following week.

Later we drove to the YMCA hostel, also in the city centre, where we met some of the other stewards. They would be leaving us soon, heading north, as they were participating in the rural exposure programme, while we formed the urban group. The week ahead was to be full of experiences and impressions that would remain indelibly engraved on our minds.

It started on the very next morning as we waited for Khepi and the minibus. Our eyes fell on the headlines of the day's papers: Shootout in Katlehong, Dead and Wounded. The bus then took us to the SACC building where we were to spend the day. We had an opportunity to talk to many people from different departments and projects reflecting the full range of SACC activities. We were impressed by their courageous championship of freedom and democracy, of the social needs of the oppressed majority, voter education (elections were still some four months off), family counselling and youth programmes, sometimes in collaboration with other groups. We were deeply moved by the presentation of the programme for aid to refugees. The enormous needs at home have not blinded Christians to the even greater need of those fleeing civil war and violence in Angola and Mozambique. Tragic stories etched themselves on our minds, but so did this evidence of active assistance.

The second day was devoted to politics — although in this country religious belief and social and political commitment can hardly be separated anyway. Our hosts had arranged a series of meetings with political parties, with organizations and institutions. I shall mention just a few aspects of an extremely interesting and strenuous day's programme. In the morning we visited the ANC Headquarters. We entered the building amidst tight security precautions and met with a representative of the youth league who gave us a very frank and convincing presentation of the ANC's assessment of the situation and of his idea of the way forward in that country. The ideas seemed realistic yet contained the necessary courage and vision. The struggle and violent resistance have given way to a concept of democracy in which there is room for everyone in the country.

We had a similarly positive experience in the afternoon at the Institute for Multi-Party Democracy. Founded by a former Inkatha member, this independent institute conducts political and social studies, puts out information material, runs training courses and seminars in non-violent problem-solving — helping people to learn the skills of democracy, which is not always without danger, when the "adversaries" who are killing each other in the streets outside are suddenly brought together in the same room to talk with each other. At this Institute we witnessed a positive combination of fervent commitment and enlightened realism, as we did at the SACC.

The third day brought us directly into contact with South African realities, of which we had only gleaned an impression from conversations up to then. The minibus fetched us early from the YMCA hostel and took us to Soweto, that sprawling black township outside Jo-burg. Nobody knows the exact number of souls crowded into these tiny brick houses, they are estimated at anything from one to three million! First we stopped at the monument to the victims of the 1976 riots — mostly children and young people. We were also struck by the number of children and young people on the streets — families have many children and the population is on average quite young. Unfortunately, owing to the extreme poverty, countless children never know a protected childhood. Instead they grow up amidst privation, insecurity and violence. Underaged single mothers abandon their new-born babies. Some of them are lucky enough to end up in the Orlando Children's Home, which we also visited. Despite economic hardship, the children are cared for with great love and attention. The home is constantly overcrowded as they do not wish to turn away the "extra" children, although no payment is received for their support. Many of the children have bad experiences behind them and are in need of psychological care. The Children's Home tries to find adoptive or foster families or at least families the children can visit, so that they can grow up in contact with family and society and strengthened in preparation for their own lives.

An experience of real hopelessness was in store for us after this experience of hope. We visited one of the many so-called squatter camps of South Africa, where misery defies description, with shacks made from corrugated iron, cardboard and car wrecks —anything that happened to be handy. There is no running water, no electricity, no heating for the bitterly cold winter, no sanitation. The shacks stand huddled together as though supporting each other, and are often occupied by as many as ten per-

sons or more. With an "address" like this it is hard to find an employer, and without a job, no-one can hope to acquire the means to extricate themselves from such misery. We found it positively embarrassing to go walking through the camp as visitors and then to drive off again in our minibus. Yet the residents knew that we were not there as tourists, they wanted us to tell their story to the world — in the hope that they would not be completely forgotten.

We spent another day in the violence-ridden eastern townships —the East Rand with places like Tokoza and Katlehong which we first saw in the newspapers on the first day and which have never been out of in the headlines ever since. Bloody clashes take place there every day and every night. ANC and Inkatha supporters seem to be irreconcilably pitted against each other here. We were accompanied by a group from the Ecumenical Monitors Programme on South Africa (EMPSA), Christians from all over the world who had volunteered to spend six weeks there in the hope of having an effect in the flashpoints and so prevent any escalation — by their mere presence, unarmed and without any protection whatsoever. They were also present for our security during our visit.

We found it positively embarrassing to go walking through the camp as visitors and then to drive off again in our minibus. Yet the residents knew that we were not there as tourists, they wanted us to tell their story to the world — in the hope that they would not be completely forgotten.

In Tembisa we visited a Methodist congregation. As we talked with people there we heard again and again about horrific acts of violence. Almost every family had lost some of its loved ones. Yet they can still talk about reconciliation and peaceful coexistence of all peoples. On our way to our next visit we turned back at one bend in the road because a hostel compound appeared in the distance and it is advisable not to go within shooting range of such places. After a long drive we stopped in another squatter camp in Tokoza, where we again found the same indescribable poverty as in Soweto. Here the people live with the added threat of nighttime violence which has already claimed many lives. For their own protection the inhabitants have armed themselves and formed self-defence units — and so the spiral of violence mounts. The churches' initiative, culminating on Good Friday, to encourage people to hand in their weapons voluntarily is therefore extremely important here, as we realized very clearly at our last stop in the East Rand, in Katlehong, where we again were guests of a Methodist congregation. We spent several hours in moving conversation with the people there, and had a time of prayer and singing together. They left a deep impression in our minds — people who live in daily danger of death yet are able in spite of everything to keep up their congregational work and go on caring for their neighbours.

After the wealth of experiences and impressions of the exposure week we arrived in the Eskom Centre, where the WCC meeting was to start in a few days. During the conference too the subject of South Africa was constantly present. Since then six months have passed, but I still feel very close to that faraway country. I read the newspapers with new eyes, I feel personally involved, I have followed the elections closely and watched the developments since. I have tried to share my experiences and impressions with as many people as possible since I came home.

I should like to conclude this report by saying a big thank you. First of all to our South African hosts, the SACC, especially Khepi, Benny, Leema and all the others who looked after us so well all that time, always treading the tightrope between letting us see as much as possible of the realities of their country without endangering our safety.

Thanks also to the WCC for making international, interdenominational encounters like this among young people possible. We would like many other young people to be able to benefit from this kind of experience in future.

Lastly, we think of all the friends we made in South Africa. We have returned to the safety of our homes but they have to go on coping day by day with the difficulties of their situation and they face tremendous changes in these months. May God be with them and lead them safely.

Kerstin Weniger, from Germany

Translated from the German Language Service, WCC

AN ECUMENICAL STUDY

THEOLOGY OF LIFE

By Martin Robra,
Theology of Life Coordinator

Lauru is the name of an island in the Pacific. You can find it on the map south of Papua New-Guinea among the group of the Solomon Islands. But you have to search for Choiseul, another name for the island given by the French, not recognizing the people of Lauru and their culture. The French wanted to honour one of their naval heroes and put his name on the map as stamp and hallmark of their presence and power.

Lauru is very close to Bougainville. During the competition among the colonial powers at the end of the 19th century, Bougainville became part of the German colonies in the Pacific while Lauru belonged to the British Empire. Since then, the people of Bougainville are divided from their neighbours and relatives in the Solomon Islands. Germany was replaced by Australia after World War I. And in 1975, the Australians handed over the islands of Buka and Bougainville to Papua-New Guinea (PNG) ignoring again the wish and will of the people.

Like in many other parts of the world, the struggle for independence of the people of Bougainville is caused by the heritage of the colonial period.

While the people of Bougainville were still suffering under military oppression of the PNG army, the people of Lauru seized their opportunity when the Solomon Islands became independent in 1978. Bishop Leslie Boseto, one of the presidents of the WCC, dedicated his life to the land and the people of Lauru reshaping the tribal communities and their relationships through the Lauru Land Conference of Tribal Community (LLCTC). Strengthening the spirit of local ecumenism, the conference has emerged from the base of a community of sharing and caring. Since 1981 the LLCTC has met

peter williams, wcc

once every year; it discusses and decides issues concerning land, projects or programmes of communities, churches or individuals, and conflicts among the communities in a participatory process.

But something new is happening in this beautiful Pacific island. The time has now come for the LLCTC to be recognized by the Choiseul Province, and the Government of the Solomon Islands, as the only forum for the grass roots people of the whole island of Lauru. Taking care of the sustainability of their land, seas, reefs, rivers, forests, and other natural resources, the people want to be involved in the decisions which affect their life and land. Foreign investors, like logging companies and others, should come through the front door of the community and not like thieves through the window and back door of the house. Their projects should be presented to the LLCTC.

To be registered, the LLCTC will give itself a constitution. Bishop Leslie Boseto has developed a theological base of Tribal Community, a Melanesian Theology of life, clearly stated in the preamble of the constitution:

"We, the family-communities in many tribes of Lauru, originating from one, holy and eternal spirit of the community God, the creator of all good things, proud of our long-held traditional wisdom and worthy customs which were passed on to us from generation to generation by our ancestors and fore-fathers, mindful of our common roots and heritages, desire to witness and promote justice, peace, love and unity through our God-given gift of communalism, do, now by the leading presence of the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ establish Lauru Land Conference of Tribal Community."

JUSTICE, PEACE, CREATION

The story of the LLCTC is an inspiring example of people's engagement, faithful to God, in their sense of responsibility for land and community. Registered and recognized by the government, the LLCTC will serve as an instrument to provide an open space for true participatory democracy of, by and for the people.

On the other hand, the continuing conflict between Bougainville and Papua New Guinea reminds us that there is and will be no justice without peace and no peace without justice.

Over against the impact of the global system and the threats to life, the people of Lauru and Bougainville help to rediscover the importance of the local community, of the Indigenous power of the people, and of the communal and spiritual dimension of life.

Realizing the interrelatedness and interconnectedness of justice, peace, and creation in the daily life of people, the call comes for solidarity; witnessing to the life-giving and life-sharing God who is present in the midst of suffering people. The initiative of the people of Lauru needs the solidarity of churches and people's movements all around the world.

WCC general secretary Konrad Raiser has said:

"The prophetic voice of challenge to those in power has to be supplemented by the voice of encouragement and support for those who sustain the web of life.

We have to recognize that we have too easily identified the call to unity with the obligation to maintain a particular system of doctrine and church order. The new challenge is to develop new ways of recognizing diversity while affirming relatedness (catholicity), to learn mutual accountability and to develop a hermeneutics of unity."

The interconnectedness of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation has been at the cutting edge of major WCC consultations since the Sixth Assembly (1993, Vancouver). In recent years a new goal has emerged: to develop a Theology of Life process, to renew ecumenical social thought and action and to bring this renewing spirit into the preparations for the World Council of Churches' Eighth Assembly (1998, Harare, Zimbabwe).

Unit III co-moderator Larry Rasmussen has written:

"...The only power that can heal and tend and transform creation is power drawn to the flawed and broken places, there by the grace and power of God to call forth powers the weak never knew they had, or to repudiate as destructive the powers of the strong who exploit. This is not suffering as itself a goal or good. (Both of these are serious pathologies.) Nor is it a call to meritorious self-sacrifice. It is suffering in the manner of Jesus-joining God, through incarnational accompaniment of and involvement in creation's suffering, so as to turn us all toward life rather than death. In this manner the way of the cross is also the way of resurrection. When the church embodies this way as its own, it is the sign of new creation.

If this kind of compassion is the central disposition of a life-centred ethic for our time, the moral norms which serve the ethic are the following:

- *Sustainability as the ongoing capacity of natural and social systems to thrive together, both for current generations and future one.*
- *Participation as the inclusion of all involved voices in society's decisions, and in obtaining and enjoying the benefits of society as well as sharing its burdens.*
- *Sufficiency as the commitment to meet the basic material needs of all life possible.*
- *Solidarity as the obligation to stand with others, with a view especially to the most vulnerable of every community."*

AN OPEN SPACE

The four criteria mentioned by Larry Rasmussen open the door for further discussion on the way out of slavery, on the way to Emmaus or to any other place where God's presence is revealed in the community of the Holy Spirit. One cannot shape one single model, or a blueprint, simply to be adjusted to the different situations. That is repeating the stupidities of the IMF Structural Adjustment Programmes on the theological level. There will be no single theology of life or ecumenical social ethic.

The emphasis will fall on sharing and solidarity among churches and with people in their struggle for justice, peace and creation, on networking, on advocacy, on encounter and dialogue.

Therefore, the Theology of Life process starts with twenty-two case studies in the local contexts. The ten Affirmations of the Seoul JPIC Convocation in 1990, can be tested as to whether they are leading us to a regulative framework of ecumenical ethic or not:

EVERYONE HAS A CONTRIBUTION

The Theology of Life programme is designed as an inclusive process open to the widest participation of churches, ecumenical and people's movements, or interested individuals; all are invited to contribute to the study. There are several ways to do this:

You can gather people and discuss the following questions:

- What are the forces of life?
- What are threats to life?
- What in local religious traditions builds up or threatens life?
- How are threats to life expressed in your local situations?
- Where do you experience the God of Life in your community?
- How is your Church or Christian community affected by its encounter with the cultures of life and death?

THE AFFIRMATIONS OF THE WORLD CONVOCATION ON JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION HELD IN SEOUL, KOREA, 1990.

1. All exercise of power is accountable to God.
2. God's option for the poor.
3. The equal value of all races and peoples.
4. That male and female are created in the image of God.
5. That truth is at the foundation of a community of free people.
6. We affirm the peace of Jesus Christ.
7. The creation as beloved of God.
8. That the earth is the Lord's.
9. The dignity and commitment of the younger generation.
10. That human rights are given by God.

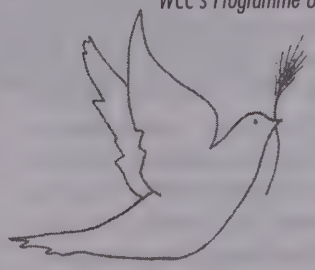
- How is Jesus present among you? How does the Spirit move? From what you have learned for a theology and ethic of life, what do you most want to tell others?
- Maybe you do not like to answer questions, but want to send us a story, a prayer, a song, an icon or painting expressing your situation in a faith perspective.
- Take a look at the Ten Affirmations. You can share with us your insights on one ore more of the affirmations. Following this way, you can contribute to and maybe participate in the case studies.
- There are many groups already involved in the programmes of WCC Unit/III. Please discuss the Theology of Life programme in the perspective of your programmatic work and share the results with us.

For responses please write to the below mentioned address.

The questions are available on a flyer which has been translated into French, German, Spanish, Portuguese and Russian. For copies of the flyer and additional background material please contact:

Theology of Life Programme
WCC Unit III
Executive Director
P.O. Box 2100
CH-1211 Geneva 2
Switzerland
Fax (41-22) 791 0361

The "Theology of Life" dove-logo was done by Rev. Bob Scott, who is on the staff of WCC's Programme Unit III.



"Go and see, and participate in common life."

Boulgakov

ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES FOR THE NEW SOUTH AFRICA

Edmund Doogue interviews Prof. Francis Wilson

The rapid changes in South Africa signalled by the end of apartheid have already begun to have a beneficial effect on the country's economy, according to a leading South African economist, Francis Wilson, Professor of Economics at the University of Cape Town.

"It [the economy] has started to move," Professor Wilson said.

Francis Wilson is also a leading South African ecumenist who edited South African Outlook, an independent journal dealing with ecumenical and racial affairs, from 1967 until 1993, during one of the most troubled periods in South Africa's history.

Asked what effect the dismantling of apartheid would have on South Africa's economy, Dr Wilson said it was better to speak of "the move to democratisation which has created a legitimacy for the economy".

An early result of this legitimacy, he said, showed in financial figures for the 12 months to June 1994, which indicated growth of 3.5 per cent in South Africa's gross domestic product.

The move to a democratic South Africa has removed both external and internal restraints and pressures on the economy, according to Professor Wilson. It was, he said, these same pressures and restraints which had been a fundamental cause of change in the system of government as well. The main external pressure was international boycotts of South Africa; the main internal restraint was the lack of legitimacy of the government.

While offering an optimistic assessment of South Africa's economic future, Professor Wilson was cautious on the question of fulfilling the high expectations many South Africans hold for high economic benefits in the immediate future in a democratic South Africa.

"I am not sure," Dr Wilson said, "that the government will be any cheaper now. It will just be doing more worthwhile things, we hope."

He pointed out that while the government had changed, it had inherited the "scaffolding" of South African society, in which "five per cent of people own everything ... the task of the new government is to reshape the political economy. The changes made so far haven't affected the distribution of wealth.

"The political economy has been shaped by at least the last 100 years, and it has to do with land distribution and the mining industry. The task facing the government is to reshape the political economy without killing the goose that laid the golden egg.

"What we have is a highly responsible government dealing with difficult expectations."

Professor Wilson said that according to a recent survey of 9000 households in South Africa the national unemployment rate (including those discouraged from seeking work because of the absence of jobs) was 30 per cent. However, he said, there was a striking contrast among various groups. The rate among white males aged from 25 to 65 years was 2 to 3 per unemployment; among black women aged 16 to 25, the rate was 71 per cent.

Dr Wilson said that he believed the main challenge for the government was increasing the number of jobs.

"The issue of jobs is for me the big issue facing this government. And the question of how we ensure that there is no divide between those with jobs and those without jobs," he said, pointing out that the number of jobs in the mining sector was falling, and that further job losses could occur because many goldmines were only marginally profitable.

But at the same time Professor Wilson warned that there was a danger that the government could spend too much money or allow prices to rise too much because of the pressure from, for example, the trade unions, whose high expectations could be a recipe for "a bumpy ride".

Inflation was a risk, but he said: "This past 12 months, for the first time in years, inflation is under 10 per cent. In African terms that is fantastic."

Of the role of the churches in a newly democratised South Africa, Dr Wilson quoted Barney Pityana, current editor of South African Outlook, who commented recently that South Africa was in danger of entering a new system of government without a new morality.

"Churches need to have a sense of this need to develop morality for South Africa," Professor Wilson said.

He said that South African Christians were particularly lucky to have the leadership and example of Desmond Tutu, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town.

"Thank God for Desmond Tutu, he has the courage and credibility to speak," Dr Wilson said.

Archbishop Tutu had already spoken out on matters crucial to the morality of South African business and political life, warning that politicians must not be tempted by "gravy train politics" — the acceptance of extra money or benefits from business and of high salaries. Archbishop Tutu had also called for the South African armaments industry, which is being urged to expand by many, including some in the African National Congress, to "be beaten into ploughshares".

The archbishop had already made it clear that churches would continue to play a critical role as they had under apartheid.

"You cannot expect churches not to speak out when you have massive unemployment and deep inequality," Dr Wilson said.

He also claimed that the international church community had to redefine its attitude to South Africa. While the churches could aid South Africa, that aid could come in the form of ideas and experience as well as material aid. "We have to be careful in South Africa not to develop a dependence mentality, based on the view that the West owes us something," he said.

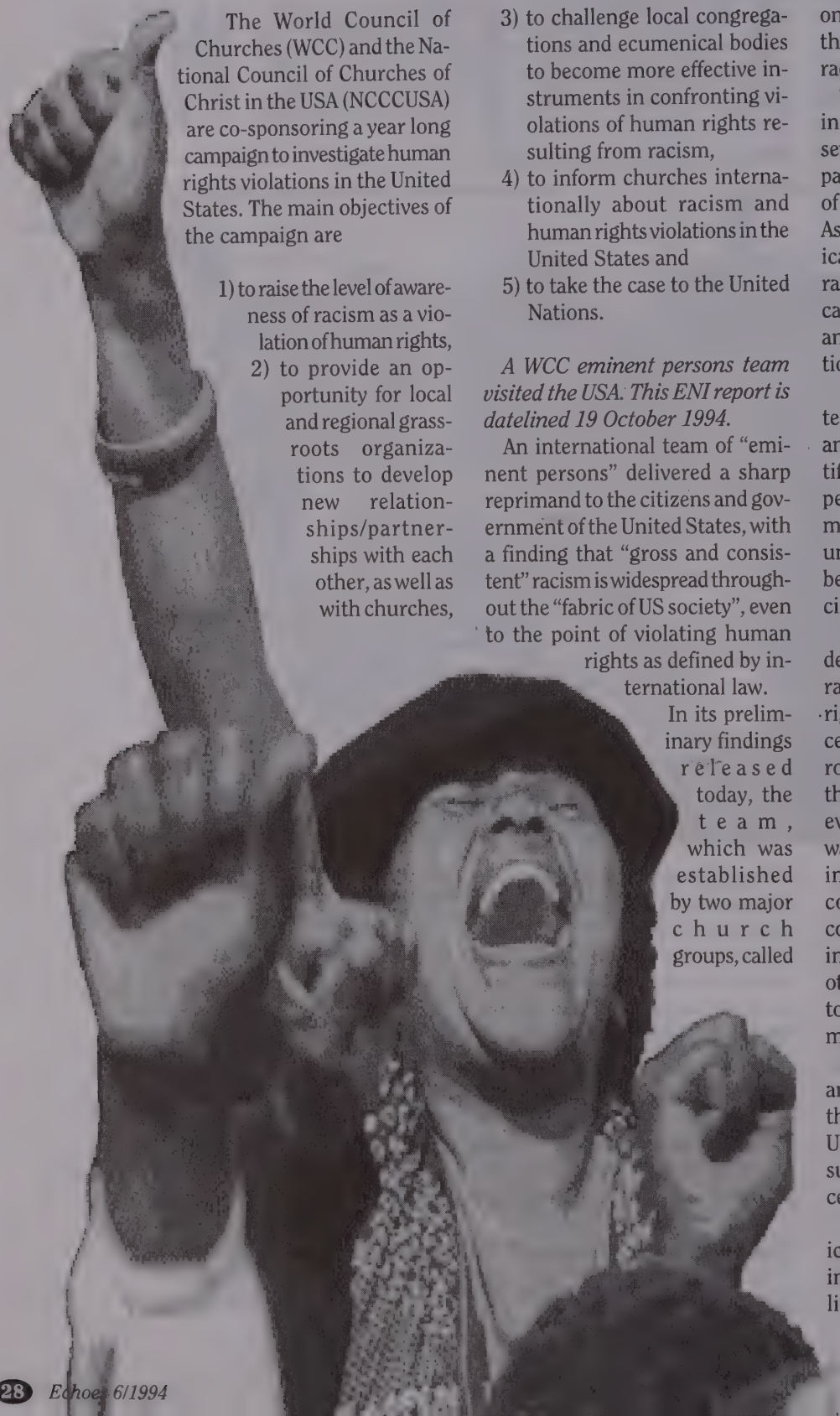
peter williams, wcc

A brighter future for them ?

Edmund Doogue is co-editor of Ecumenical News International (ENI).

"South Africa also has a lot to teach the world and we have to move away from the idea that aid is a one-way process," he said. "The churches in America are trying to create a more humane society. Maybe South Africa has something to teach them about this."

U.S. CAMPAIGN ON RACISM AS A HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION



The World Council of Churches (WCC) and the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCUSA) are co-sponsoring a year long campaign to investigate human rights violations in the United States. The main objectives of the campaign are

1) to raise the level of awareness of racism as a violation of human rights,
2) to provide an opportunity for local and regional grassroots organizations to develop new relationships/partnerships with each other, as well as with churches,
3) to challenge local congregations and ecumenical bodies to become more effective instruments in confronting violations of human rights resulting from racism,
4) to inform churches internationally about racism and human rights violations in the United States and
5) to take the case to the United Nations.

A WCC eminent persons team visited the USA. This ENI report is datelined 19 October 1994.

An international team of "eminent persons" delivered a sharp reprimand to the citizens and government of the United States, with a finding that "gross and consistent" racism is widespread throughout the "fabric of US society", even to the point of violating human rights as defined by international law.

In its preliminary findings released today, the team, which was established by two major church groups, called on the United Nations to monitor the US government's record on racism.

The team of nine people divided into groups of three and visited seven cities across the US in the past two weeks to hear hundreds of witnesses — African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos and American Indians — give evidence of racism in many aspects of American life, from bias in immigration and refugee policy to discrimination in the criminal justice system.

At the end of the hearings, the team said that "among the most angry and alienated groups to testify before us were the indigenous peoples and African Americans, many of whom felt so strongly under threat that they genuinely believed they were objects of genocidal policies".

Some of the most surprising evidence given to the "hearings on racism as a violation of human rights in the United States" concerned racism as a factor in environmental policy. The team said they had been surprised to hear evidence of environmental and waste disposal policies which seemingly singled out communities comprised largely of people of colour for toxic dumping, the siting of hazardous industries and other practices which posed a threat to the life and health of those communities".

Puerto Ricans, Native Americans and Hawaiians told the hearings that the racism they suffered in the US stemmed from "the colonial subjugation of their lands and ancestors".

In Okmulgee, Oklahoma, American Indians told one of the hearings that members of their families had been beaten up, shot and

killed for no reason other than hatred of Indians.

"Witnesses said the mainstream of white society ignored and even denied the issue of racism, and that the mainstream media consistently under-reported the issue," the team said.

The team, set up by the World Council of Churches, based in Geneva, and the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, based in New York, also criticised US church inaction on racism, saying: "We were mindful ... of the responsibilities of the whole church in combating racism. We found that in many areas, with some notable exceptions, concerns about racism were limited largely to the black churches. This constitutes a denial of the prophetic role of the church in combating racism as a sin."

The team concluded that "there is widespread evidence of gross and consistent patterns of racism throughout the fabric of US society; many of the acts of racism testified to in our hearings constitute apparent violations of fundamental human rights as set out in international law".

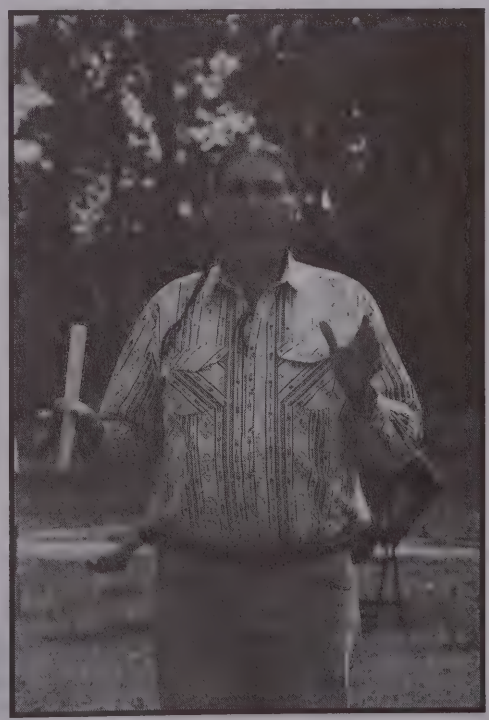
The team recommended that "the UN, through its agencies, especially the Human Rights Commission, monitor the US government's performance in fulfilling its international obligations in this area" and called for "full and thorough investigations of all these patterns of racism by the appropriate agencies of the US government, monitored by the media and the American people themselves".

The team of nine, led by Aaron Tolen, political scientist and a WCC president, and including Mohideen Abdul Kader, a prominent Malaysian human rights lawyer, Federico Pagura, a bishop in the Methodist church in Argentina, and Doreen Boyd, deputy general secretary of the World Young Women's Christian Association, will also write full reports which will be given to the UN agencies and churches.

Ghanaian born British member of parliament Paul Boateng was another member, with South African journalist Donald Woods, Lopeti Senituli from the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre in Fiji, Wendy Singh from Barbados, co-director of Caribbean Rights and Professor Kempton Makamure from the University of Zimbabwe.

The Findings from the Hearings, and other data compiled by the project's staff, will be presented to the United Nations Human Rights' Commission and UN Special Rapporteur on Racism in February 1995.

El Paso, Texas - The Martinez, an agricultural worker family, in their modest one room flat.



A presentation by Carter Camp, one of the Indians from White Eagle, Ponca Nation, near Tulsa in Oklahoma.

photos by peter williams, wcc

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS THE USA

In its November report, Amnesty International (AI) calls attention to "a major new crime bill which extends the number of crimes punishable by death under federal law from two to about 60 ... signed by President Clinton on 13 September 1994.

AI condemned the move as a major setback for human rights in the USA. It further adds to the grave concerns AI already has about the use of the death penalty there. Such a step is contrary to international human rights standards and treaties which encourage governments to restrict the use of the death penalty, with a view to abolition.

The organization is further concerned that a provision which would have allowed defendants to challenge their death sentences on grounds of racial discrimination, (the Racial Justice Act) included in an earlier version of the bill, was dropped from the final version.

The crimes to which the federal death penalty will now be applied range from the murder of federal officials, to non-homicidal offences, including the attempted assassination of the President and major drug-related crimes.

Previously the death penalty was authorized under federal law only for murder during air-craft hijacking and drug-related homicides. There have been no executions under federal law since 1963.

RACISM AND VIOLENCE IN EUROPE

There are new strains and stresses in Europe. The continent is taking on a new political shape. Along with that new shape come determined attempts to restrict the numbers of people able to come to Europe in search of security, shelter, work or family reunion. The bureaucratic obstacles have increased; immigration points at airports and other borders are regularly the scene of distress and harassment for those seeking to enter for the first time. There are persistent accusations of violation of basic human rights in these processes.

Added to that comes the increasingly strident voices of racism heard in many parts. Those who are Black or who look 'foreign' know that, in many parts of Europe, they are at risk as they move around their community, or even in their own homes.

There are many courageous responses to this riding tide of racism and xenophobia. Organisations and individuals have spoken out, have taken action. Emergency telephone services have been established; voluntary legal services are available; support groups for the victims of racism have been formed and lobby groups against severe immigration legislation are active. There is already an active network of 'sanctuary' churches in some European countries.

But despite this, the voices of the Right continue to be heard on the political scene, calling for even more repressive legislation against immigrants and migrant workers; and taking pride in the violence they are able to exert against those they do not accept within their society.

In the last four years or so, the numbers of applications to Unit III for financial support from anti-racism groups, immigrant support and solidarity groups, has increased sharply. We acknowledge that there is a clear challenge to the churches in Europe to be active, and to be seen in action. Part of that challenge is for the churches to introduce more programmatic work against racism and anti-racism training. Statements made in church assemblies are not enough anymore. The commitments made in those pronouncements must be seen in action in the communities.

A number of European church leaders, following an initiative taken by Great Britain's Archbishop of Canterbury, signed a joint statement expressing their concern. It was published on May 18th and, on that day, many of them made publicised visits to places in their communities which have experienced racial violence or where the victims of racial violence are gathered. That statement is included here.

'Combatting Racism in Europe' has been jointly published by the World Council of Churches, the Conference of European Churches and the Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME). It is available in English, French and German.

It sets out the conventions and documents, on racism and xenophobia, within the European Union. It is a useful guide to monitoring the actions and statements of governments at the national level. Sometimes governments sound courageous and steadfast in Brussels, but fail woefully when they

return home.

It includes a suggested programme of action for the European Union, an explanation of a CCME initiative, called 'The Starting Line' and suggestions about how to use those European legal instruments to combat racism.

Copies are available from PCR, Unit III, World Council of Churches.

EUROPEAN CHURCH LEADERS' STATEMENT ON RACISM

18 MAY 1994

Christian people in Europe have been able to welcome the breaking down of barriers and the liberating possibilities which have been brought about by the collapse of totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe. There are, however, some new causes for alarm. As Church leaders, we view with the very gravest concern the rise of Racism, Xenophobia and anti-Semitism in all European countries. We are troubled about the unequal treatment given to those of different social or ethnic origin. We are especially disturbed, indeed outraged, by the growth of harassment and violence directed against such people. Every attack of this kind is an attack on one who is made in the image of God. We declare our solidarity with those threatened or molested, in the name of Christ who himself became human.

The variety of cultural and religious traditions which belong historically to Europe are part of a rich heritage which Christians acknowledge and celebrate. We reject any suggestion of superiority or movement towards exclusiveness which would deprive others of a place in the new Europe, whether they have been here for some time, have a human right to enter or have sought safety from persecution or conflict.

Racism — the assumption of superiority and the exercise of dominant power against those of different ethnic background — is a sin. We call on all Christians, and we invite those of other faith communities, to work to eradicate racism from ourselves, our churches, our countries and our continent. This process should be carried out in the spheres of housing, health, employment, immigration and refuge policy, and all other relevant areas.

We recognise there may be a cost, in resources needed and criticism to be endured. However this is a requirement of God's mission. As followers of Jesus Christ we can offer nothing less.

Those who signed this Statement:

Archbishop of Canterbury
Primate of All England and Metropolitan.

Austria
Prof. Dr. Johannes Dantine, Oberkirchenrat, Evangelische Kirch in Österreich.

Belgium
Godfried Cardinal Danneels, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference,
Metropolitan Panteleimon of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinope for the Orthodox Church in Belgium,
Revd Daniel Vanescote, President of the Synodal Assembly of the United Belgian Protestant Church,
Revd Canon Cameron Walker, President of the Belgian Anglican Central Committee, and President of the Consultation of Christian Churches in Belgium.

Croatia
Franjo Cardinal Kuharic, Catholic Church.

Czech Republic
Miroslav Broz, General Secretary, The Synodal Council of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren.

Denmark
Revd Knud Wumpelmann, President of the Baptist Union.

Finland
Archbishop John Vikstrom, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.

France
Mgr Joseph Duval, Catholic Archbishop of Rouen,
Pastor Michel Bertrand, President of the National Council of the Reformed Church in France,
Revd Jacques Stewart, President of the French Protestant Federation,
M. Jeremie, Presiding Bishop of the Orthodox Church,

Germany
Dr. Klaus Engelhardt, Presiding Bishop of the EKD, the Evangelical Church in Germany.

Hungary
Archbishop Istvan Seregely, Archbishop of Eger, President of the Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference.

Italy
Dr. Gianni Rostan, Moderator, Waldensian Church, Rome,
President Franco Scaramuccia, Baptist Union,

Pastor Giorgio Bouchard, President of the Protestant Federation,
Dean Hartmut Diekmann, Lutheran Church,
Pastor Claudio H. Martelli, President of the Methodist Church,
Commissioner Anna Hannevik (Salvation Army).
Cardinal Martini, Archbishop of Milan
Cardinal Camillo Ruini, Vicar-General of His Holiness the Pope

Netherlands
Revd W. Beekmann, Netherlands Reformed Church,
Dr. P. Boomsma, Chairman, Reformed Churches of the Netherlands,
Cardinal A. Simonis, Archbishop of Utrecht.

Norway
Bishop Andreas Aarflot, Bishop of Oslo, Norwegian Bishops' Conference.
Dr. Sirun Mogedal, Church of Norway Council on Foreign Relations,
Revd Lars Erik Nordby, Chairman, Norwegian Christian Council,
Oddbjorn Evenshaug, Chairman, Church of Norway, National Council,
Nils Jernsletten, Chairman, Church of Norway, Sami Church Council,

Portugal
Cardinal Antonio Ribeiro, Patriarch of Lisbon.

Romania
Teoctist, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

Sweden
Archbishop Gunnar Weman, Archbishop of Uppsala.

Switzerland
Revd Heinrich Rusterholz, Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches.

Britain &Ireland
Presidents of the Council of Churches for Britain & Ireland
Most Revd Father Olu Abiola, Council of African & Afro-Caribbean Churches UK,
Revd Hugh Davidson, Church of Scotland,
Mrs. Myriel Davies, Union of Welsh Independents,
The Most Revd John Habgood, Church of England,
Cardinal Basil Hume, Roman Catholic,
Rt. Revd John Neill, Church of Ireland.

Ireland
The Most Revd R.H.A. Eames, Primate of All Ireland, Church of Ireland,
The Rt. Revd Dr. Andrews Rodgers, Moderator of the General Assembly (Presbyterian Church in Ireland),
Revd Richard Taylor, President of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

Scotland
Revd Peter Arthur, United Reformed Church,
Mr. J.F. Henderson, United Free Church of Scotland,
Bishop Holloway, Episcopal Church of Scotland,
Revd Alan Horner, Methodist Church,
Marion A. Morton, Society of Friends,
Revd Chi Khen Pan, Chinese Christian Churches,
Mrs. Sheena Paul, Scottish Congregational Church,
Rt. Revd James Weatherhead, Church of Scotland,
Archbishop Winning, Roman Catholic Church.
Rev David Jenkins, United Reformed Church.
Col. David Napier, Salvation Army.
Rev Alex Wright, Baptist Union of Scotland

Wales
Most Revd Alwyn Rice Jones, Archbishop of Wales,
Revd D.H. Owen, General Secretary, Presbyterian Church of Wales,
Archbishop John Aloysius Ward, Archbishop of Cardiff.
England
Revd Dr. John A. Newton, Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council,
Revd Brian Beck, President of the Methodist Conference,
Revd Stephen Gaukroger, President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

Orthodox Church
His Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos of Constantinople
Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and Great Britain.
Metropolitan John Zizioulas of Pergamos
Bishop Aristarchos of Zenoupolis

A PROGRAMME TO OVERCOME VIOLENCE

One sweltering, sunny day in August 1993, eight people from around the world met in Geneva. Invited there by the World Council of Churches, they sat together for two days to make plans — plans that were to make a significant contribution to the life of the Council.

For some time, as Executive Secretary in the WCC's International Affairs team, responsible for issues of peace and reconciliation, I had realised that a slow but important shift was taking place in many of the WCC's member churches. "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation" had, as a programme, engaged the energies and imagination of many Christians. But a focused concern to take initiatives in peace issues — active non-violence, mediation, peace education and reconciliation — was emerging as an urgent priority in many member churches.

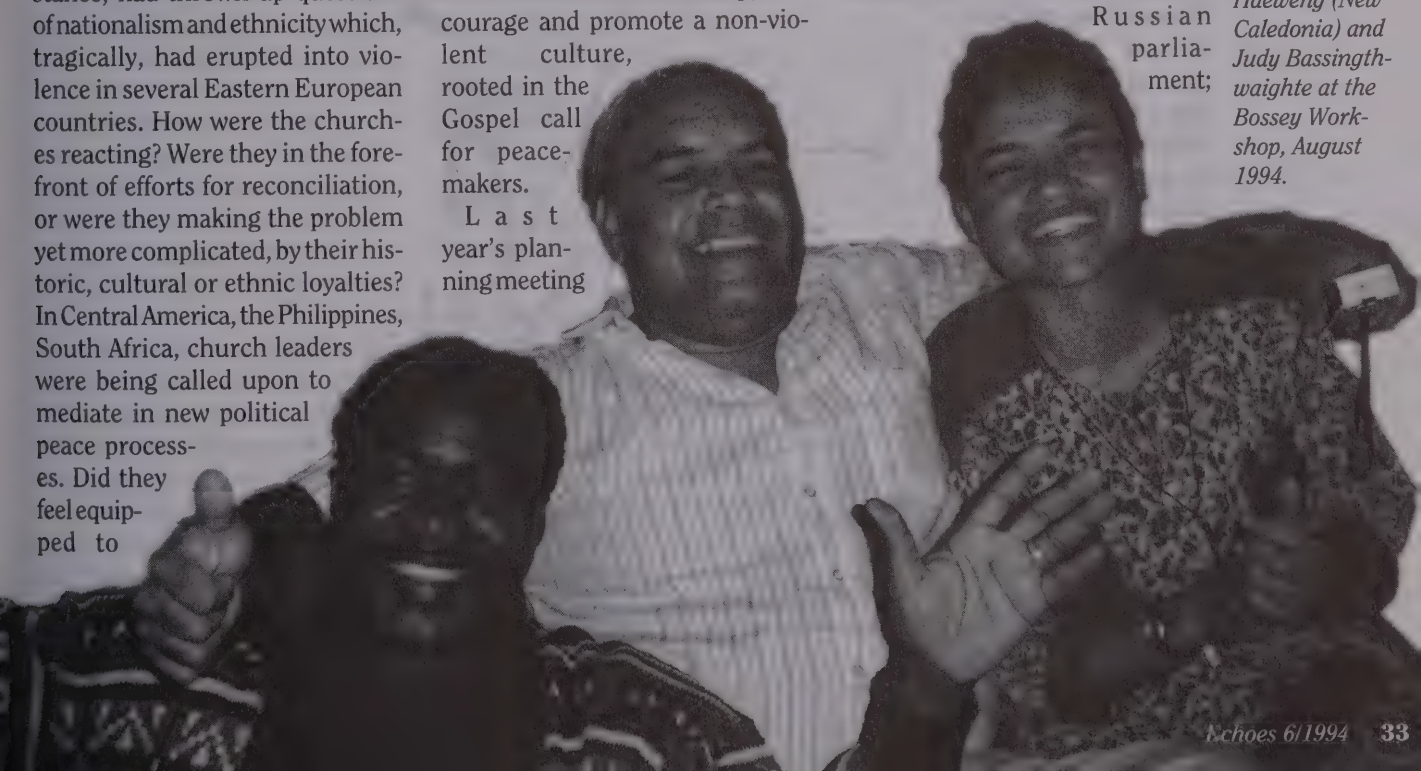
New challenges called for new responses, for a re-examination of what Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, meant when he told his followers "Blessed are the peacemakers".

The end of the Cold War, for instance, had thrown up questions of nationalism and ethnicity which, tragically, had erupted into violence in several Eastern European countries. How were the churches reacting? Were they in the forefront of efforts for reconciliation, or were they making the problem yet more complicated, by their historic, cultural or ethnic loyalties? In Central America, the Philippines, South Africa, church leaders were being called upon to mediate in new political peace processes. Did they feel equipped to face these challenges? What could they learn from each other? And how could the ecumenical movement accompany them, helping to provide some of the resources for these important new tasks?

Meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, in January this year, the WCC's Central Committee took a major and far-reaching decision. Following an initiative taken by two Committee members — a Canadian Quaker, Barbara Bazett, and an American member of the Church of the Brethren, Donald Miller — it approved, unanimously, the setting up of a "Programme to Overcome Violence". Unlike the "Programme to Combat Racism", established 25 years before, it would be building on initiatives already being undertaken in many member churches. But it would also identify areas where the ecumenical movement could help, encourage and promote a non-violent culture, rooted in the Gospel call for peacemakers.

Last year's planning meeting in Geneva had already laid down guidelines for two important gatherings: one, a consultation of people actively engaged in working for peace in church-related groups, and the second a workshop on active non-violence. Suddenly they took on a new significance, important elements in planning our new Council-wide programme.

In early June this year at the Corrymeela Centre in Northern Ireland — itself a remarkable venture in healing and reconciliation — the first Consultation brought together 63 participants from 41 countries. They came as people active in peace initiatives, at many levels and in widely differing circumstances. South Africans, working non-violently, yet surrounded by constant violence; a Russian, telling of the role his church had played last year in mediating between President Yeltsin and the Russian parliament;

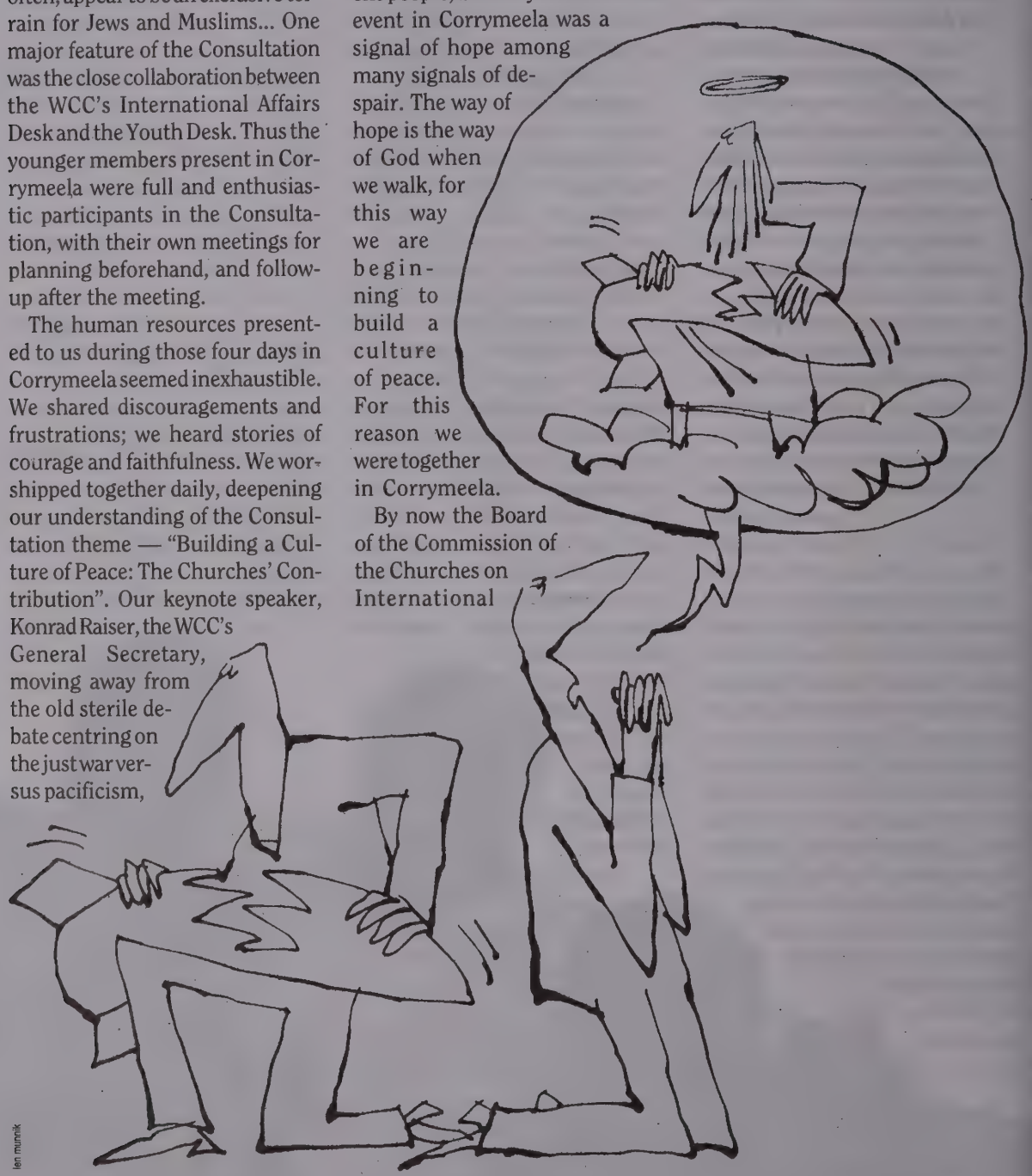


Wellington Makunta (Zambia), Pierre Haeweng (New Caledonia) and Judy Bassingthwaighte at the Bossey Workshop, August 1994.

an Ethiopian, using insights gained from the non-violent movement for peace moves in East and Central Africa; Christians from Nicaragua, Panama, El Salvador, engaged in Central American peace initiatives; North Americans working amongst youth gangs in city ghettoes, and promoting peace education programmes in their churches; Orthodox Christians from the Middle East, long active in the peace processes which, too often, appear to be an exclusive terrain for Jews and Muslims... One major feature of the Consultation was the close collaboration between the WCC's International Affairs Desk and the Youth Desk. Thus the younger members present in Corrymeela were full and enthusiastic participants in the Consultation, with their own meetings for planning beforehand, and follow-up after the meeting.

The human resources presented to us during those four days in Corrymeela seemed inexhaustible. We shared discouragements and frustrations; we heard stories of courage and faithfulness. We worshipped together daily, deepening our understanding of the Consultation theme — "Building a Culture of Peace: The Churches' Contribution". Our keynote speaker, Konrad Raiser, the WCC's General Secretary, moving away from the old sterile debate centring on the just war versus pacificism, shared with us new and more dynamic visions of the churches' witness for peace. Working in groups, we identified four main areas of particular concern: theology, education, politics and communication. As Aldo Etchegoyen, a Methodist bishop from Argentina, wrote later: "Different voices and points of view came together, different races and colours, different languages and cultures worked together. Variety and unity. Different people, but only one will. This event in Corrymeela was a signal of hope among many signals of despair. The way of hope is the way of God when we walk, for this way we are beginning to build a culture of peace. For this reason we were together in Corrymeela.

By now the Board of the Commission of the Churches on International



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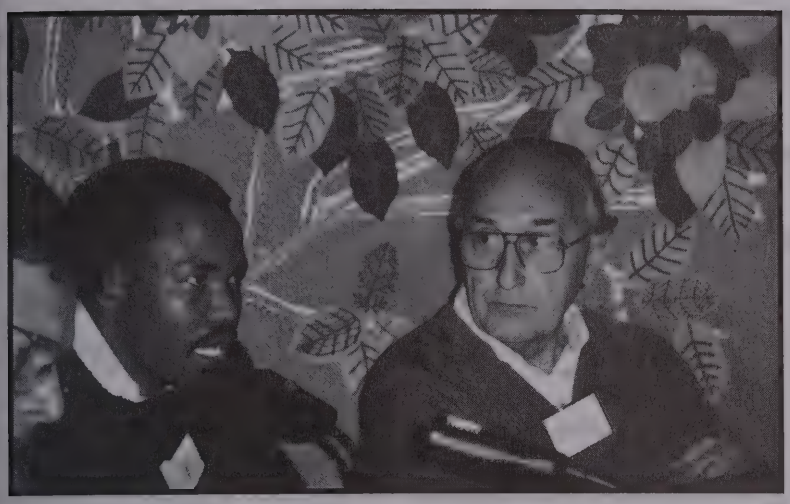
elizabeth salter, wcc



Samuel Shole and Moderator Lamar Gibble at the Corrymeela Consultation.

Affairs — which shares responsibility for advising the Council on its peace and reconciliation work — was enthusiastic about the new programme to overcome violence. At a meeting in Zambia in late June, members worked hard on guidelines and principles: a proposal was made to write to every member church and other bodies likely to be interested in the programme, with a leaflet and a questionnaire asking for reactions and suggestion. A database of church-related peace groups worldwide, due to be published by the WCC this autumn, will also be a useful resource in identifying initiatives — and needs.

One of those pressing needs, already mentioned by many groups, is for more training. A workshop on active non-violence, "Living with our Differences", was the second meeting planned back in August last year. It came together at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, near Geneva, a year later, and was led and resourced by Diana Francis (formerly President of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation) and by Albert Whittles, a South African Methodist minister and a trainer of monitors for the South African elections.

The workshop was a powerful experience for all those who took part. Twenty four people from 21 countries spent ten days working and worshipping together, discovering — sometimes painfully — their differences, their human resources and the spiritual roots of their concern to live and work non-violently. Exploring the many areas where a non-violent lifestyle can be a powerful witness, with the power to transfrom situations of pain and conflict, was a source of encouragement for many, and an exciting new experience for others. Now participants plan to take initiatives to promote similar workshops at a national or regional level.

Other initiatives are springing up amongst the churches and movements. The youth Peace and Justice Campaign planned for 1995-96 will include training in non-violent responses to conflict, youth exchanges on various issues of peace and justice and the preparation of campaign materials. In Africa, there will be a series of sub-regional youth leadership courses, plus a youth and students' gathering on the theme of "Building a Culture of Peace".

A programme initiated as a direct response to the recent horrific conflict in Rwanda is Church World Action Rwanda. This incorporates work in overcoming violence, and its impact, into humanitarian assistance with refugees from the conflict. The ACIST Programme (African Community Initiatives Support Teams) will seek, through a variety of confidence building efforts, to encourage refugees to take initiatives in their communities, to plan their own futures, and to develop a climate of trust, hope and safety.

A wealth of stories from the churches are encouraging signs of a new understanding of the role they can and should be playing as peacemakers and reconcilers. In a world where conflict and brutality so often characterise relations between societies, building a culture of peace may seem an impossible dream. But the enthusiastic response of so many in the churches to a programme to overcome violence, and their own commitment to a gospel of peace, gives ample proof that the signs of hope are not, in fact, just whistling in the dark. We have to look for fresh priorities, fresh visions. This new discovery is, in fact, an old discovery: God's gift of peace is there to be shared.

Elizabeth Salter: International Affairs, Unit III, Justice, Peace and Creation

A shorter version of this article was first published in the British Quaker journal, The Friend, in September 1994.

La Familia Ecuatoriana
"EN EL OJO DEL HURACÁN"

por Gladys Ruiz T.

Así como los ciclones arrasan con las raíces de los árboles y los cimientos de los edificios, las crisis por las que viene atravesando América Latina y el Mundo, están minando la base de la sociedad, que es la familia.

Esta percepción es la que motivó a la Organización de las Naciones Unidas a declarar 1994, **"Año Internacional de la Familia"**.

¿QUÉ ES LA FAMILIA?

La invocación a la familia, desde los albores de la humanidad hasta nuestros días, ha estado atravesada por diferentes connotaciones ideológicas, subordinadas al tipo de sociedad en la que se han expresado. Así, su comprensión ha sido, en la mayoría de los casos, un modelo, un ideal, una norma, antes que una realidad globalizadora.

Las ideologías que a su hora se han difundido en relación a la familia, han provocado que su análisis esté saturado de matices de "culpabilidad" y "recriminaciones morales", que encubren sus relaciones y dependencias objetivas con otros factores de la vida social. Su "idealización" hace que se presente como un modelo en si mismo, sin tiempo, sin historia, sin relaciones de casualidad.

Y es obvio. La familia, como cualquier institución social, lleva en si factores que pueden ser cuantificables, sujetos a pautas de investigación científica y, factores que más bien caen en los niveles de apreciación ética, moral, religiosa y educativa.

SUMMARY OF THE ORIGINAL ARTICLE IN SPANISH

THE ECUADORIAN FAMILY "IN THE EYE OF THE HURRICANE"

Just as hurricanes are tearing apart the foundations of buildings, the crisis facing the world today is slowly wearing away the base of society, the family.

This perception is what motivated the United Nations to declare 1994 as "The International Year of the Family". The traditional family model is constituted by: the man-father (the economic provider of the group), the woman-mother (responsible for child care and domestic work). However, the lines of action for the International Year of the Family clearly state that the institution of the family in Latin America and the Caribbean is undergoing rapid transformation due to the massive incorporation of women in the job market. Therefore, governments should recognize the importance of protecting and respecting the new family models which are emerging out of this situation.

Ecuador, like most Latin-American countries, now faces unprecedented poverty. For example, in 1990, 78.8% of the total population was considered to live below the poverty level.

In comparison with other Latin-American countries, Ecuador has a high fertility rate. The process of reproduction plays an important role in the consolidation of a family and thus requires access to basic services such as: housing, health and education. Between 1970 and 1980 these services were greatly expanded. However, during the crisis of the 80s, the government restricted public spending which led to serious qualitative and quantitative reductions of these same services.

UN IMPORTANTE PROCESO DE TRANSFORMACIÓN

La Declaración de Cartagena de Indias que marcó las líneas de acción para el Año Internacional de la Familia, señala que "... reconociendo que la institución familiar en América Latina y el Caribe está viviendo un rápido proceso de transformación ..." debido fundamentalmente a la incorporación masiva de la mujer al mercado de trabajo y los cambios en las relaciones de género, "... los gobiernos reconocen la importancia de conceder la más alta protección y respeto a las diferentes formas que asume la familia ..."

Es necesario destacar que en esta declaración está implícito el abandono de un solo modelo normativo de familia, en relación al cual se califica a las otras formas presentes, como "familias desorganizadas", "irregulares". Se supera también la búsqueda de "justificativos" que expliquen el por qué de la "destructuración", "desarticulación", "desintegración" de la familia.

Decade of the Churches
in Solidarity with Women
1988 - 1998

Teamvisit to Australia
April 1994

Like every country Australia has its clichés — kangaroos and koalas, vast deserts and sprawling cities, Aborigines and White settlers... But for me as a European, Australia is above all very far away. So far away that I never imagined I would ever go there. But life and friendship are full of surprises and on Wednesday 6 April, almost before I could believe it was happening, I found myself aboard flight QF 10. After a 48-hour stop-over in the humid heat of Singapore, time enough to realize that my adventure really had started, I boarded the plane for Darwin, the first stop on our visit. In the plane, as chance would have it, I was sitting beside a fellow countryman from France who was a gold prospector in Guyana. You can't make that up! I couldn't help wondering what precious treasures I would find during this trip to the end of the earth.

Bob Scott was waiting for me at the airport, capable and reassuring, accompanied by Pastor Wali Fejo. It was 7 o'clock in the morning and already very humid. The countryside was bathed in a spectacularly clear and beautiful light. In the airport cafteria we sat down to a hearty anglo-saxon breakfast. Many of the people around us were Aborigines. Reality and fiction met... Wali drove us out to the Nungalinya theological college for Aborigines, where we were to stay while in Darwin. I found a few rustic buildings, with somewhat doubtful toilets, and in particular not enough of them for the number of students, male and female, who normally live there. (When we arrived the college was empty because of the holidays). On the far side of the "campus" there were a few neat, air-conditioned bungalows, which I was told were for the teaching staff and the director. After a short rest to recover a little from jet-lag we went back to the airport to pick up our third travelling companion, Walter Proazzi, who was arriving from Argentina. The other half of the team comprising Young Kim Sawa (Japan), Brian Eagle (Aotearoa-New Zealand) and Rosslyn Reed (Australia) were starting their visit in the city of Perth. We were to join them in Melbourne.

In the afternoon we had our first meeting with the college authorities, some former students, some women from the local "Decade" group and two Aboriginal women. Our first, surprising impression was of the immense gap between the Whites who were rich, well-dressed, confident and the Aborigenes who were shy, simply-dressed and hesitant to speak. The "soft" racism affecting the Whites, their biblical patriarchalism, quickly became hard to take. On the other side of the table, Gelung Gondarra, an Aboriginal woman of great authority said: "If you touch our culture, you touch the hands of God!" And then the unbelievable happened : a White woman invited me to the monthly meeting of the Decade group which was to be held the next day, then turned to the two Aboriginal women and invited them as well. "They've been meeting for five years and this is the first time we've been 'admitted'", Gelung told me later.

brenda fitzpatrick, wcc

...try to touch the hands of God...

At the Sunday service next day, Bob, Walter and myself received the blessing, in the vernacular language, from the hands of Liyapidiny Marika, the first Aboriginal woman to be ordained in the (Protestant) Uniting Church in Australia. It was a deeply moving moment. The children were coming in and out of the chapel. One delightful little girl asked me, "How many 'people' do you have?" It took me a moment

to realize that she didn't mean my "family" but my "tribe". What could I say to her?

In the afternoon I met Gelung and Marika again to go and visit the Decade group in a smart district of Darwin. With my very committed way of talking, helped by the fact of being European and foreign, I frankly went down well. But this was not the important thing. What struck me was the surreptitious glances the White women seemed to be giving their unaccustomed guests, who were also like foreigners to them. I was shocked by the absurdity of the situation, especially as we were there to talk about solidarity with women. Not being used to it, I also found it odd to be introduced as a delegate representing the WCC, which of course I was for the duration of this visit — a "living letter".

The strongest emotional moment of the whole visit — and there were many — came after this meeting, in a long conversation I had with the two Aboriginal women. Sitting on the ground which is so vital for them, they were able to tell me at length about themselves and their situation. Tell me about their faith, their spirituality frowned upon by the Whites, their strength as women who are the guardians of the God who passes through them, because they are the key which opens up the divine.

The next day we flew into the centre of the country. I know ecumenical visits are sometimes accused of just being ecclesiastical tourism, but I can testify that this was not the case with this Australian tour. To be honest, I saw little or nothing of Australia and the flights within the country simply served to add a few pieces to the jigsaw puzzle. Of Darwin I saw only Nungalinya College and the shopping centre next door. In Alice Springs, where we spent only 24 hours, I did not get to the famous landmark of Uluru which all the brochures describe. But the important thing is that I did see and feel that arid, ochre soil that my companions had told me about, I breathed the crystal air, I felt the same desire to sit down on the ground and be alone for a while ...to try to touch the hands of God...

We noted an urgent need for reconciliation among different groups and at many levels. Not least among women!

But the programmes prepared for us by our local contacts left us no respite. We encountered another Australia — White, "provincial", racist and misogynist, like one minister who told us quite openly that before our visit he had never heard of the Decade and that afterwards he hoped never to hear of it again!

The next stage on our journey took us south, into the wind and rain of autumn. After the sub-tropical temperatures of the first part of our tour it came as a shock — in every respect. In Melbourne we met up with the other part of the team, but the two groups had had such different experiences that we never really managed to form a unit during our trip. Our programme included many meetings with church authorities (Anglican bishop, church presidents), local ecumenical councils and, at a delightful evening, the committee for solidarity with women of the State of Victoria. The programme continued along similar lines in Sydney, where we met church leaders, the Australian Ecumenical Council, the national "Decade" group (presided by Rosslyn, a member of our team). Our "official" visit ended with a mid-decade celebration involving almost all the denominations, despite their divisions. This was a rather dull and depressing service which seemed to symbolize the general mood of the Australian churches as far as the Decade is concerned. On the last day of my stay I had been invited to preach in the only Anglican parish in the state of New South Wales to encourage the ordination of women to the priesthood (while the rest of the church is against it, at least in this part of the country). The personal situation of the priest of this parish, who was going through a divorce, his obvious fragility and distress troubled me greatly, and my sermon on the woman caught in adultery was particularly ill-chosen for this man with whom, for once, I wanted to show solidarity...

I cannot finish without mentioning some of the conclusions we reached on our visit and which we have communicated to the Decade office in Geneva, in a report on which I shall draw here.

We were struck by the general sense of disillusionment, or even despair, affecting all the groups we met. Paradoxically, the most dynamic ones are those who have decided to stop using official church channels to promote the goals of the Decade. For all these groups it has become pretty obvious that the issue of the full presence and participation of women in the church, or of the church's support for women's struggle in society are no longer considered "essential" for the life and future of the churches.

We noted an urgent need for reconciliation among different groups and at many levels. Not least among women! Because for some of them the Decade has proved to be a time of separation and division: between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, between women conducting their struggle within the church and

those who have left it, between women deacons, priests and ministers and those seeking other forms of ministry, among women committed to traditional family structures — notably Orthodox women — and women seeking to develop a partnership within more flexible structures. How can the Decade here become a bridge and help to forge links rather than turning into a minefield that explodes at every step?

For the last five years a "Decade" group, now officially mandated by the Protestant church, has been meeting in Geneva. What I saw and noted in Australia reminds me strangely of the situation in Geneva... and, who knows, perhaps also the rest of the world. We shall have to await the results of the other visits to get a clear picture, but I am convinced that so long as the churches do not take the goals of the Decade really seriously, and do not make it "their" priority, women cannot expect much solidarity from them.

But please note, the reconciliation I mentioned above does not simply mean adding women to church structures. The Decade is about conversion at a much deeper level.

As for me, this journey unlike any other has left me with a few specs of ochre dust between my fingers, and something of the key that leads to the divine.

Isabelle Graesslé
Geneva, September 1994

Isabelle Graesslé was born in France. She is a doctor of theology and has been an ordained minister of the National Protestant Church of Geneva for seven years. She heads the Centre Protestant d'Etudes, an adult education centre. She is a member of her church's Decade group.

Translated from the French Language Service, WCC

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH PRESENTS A TEN-POINT PROGRAMME FOR INVOLVEMENT IN ECONOMIC ISSUES

by Rob van Drimmelen

An international working group should be established to study economic and ecological issues on behalf of the churches in Russia. This was one of the recommendations made by representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church at an international consultation held in Moscow, 15-17 September 1994. The consultation on "Economy, Values and Society in Russia", was jointly organized by WCC Unit III and the Russian Orthodox Church. Participants included representatives from several churches in Russia and a number of international experts. It was the first time in the history of Russia that churches came together to discuss economic issues.

Participants heard stories about the hardships endured by the Russian people following the shock therapy aimed at liberalizing the Russian economy. These policies have led to a national disaster with plummeted living standards and one-third of the population now living below the poverty line. At the same time, a group of "new rich" is emerging who indulge in lavish life styles but have "vacuum in their eyes".

Consumerism and the love for money are a logical result of the weakening role of religion in the Russian society. This is also seen as one of the reasons for growing criminality : "In the past we had the Iron Curtain, now people need iron doors to protect themselves against the growing number of thieves", said Prof. Mikhael Gelvanovsky of the Moscow Orthodox Charity Centre of Social Protection. According to Prof. Gelvanovsky: "A one-time liberalization of an economic system, which functioned for decades under tough political, social, economic and,

Consumerism and the love for money are a logical result of the weakening role of religion in the Russian society.

more important, religious restrictions, could produce nothing but what it has produced — a monstrous pseudo-market mutation with an expressly criminal foundation".

"In the end", said Dutch economist Prof. Bob Goudzwaard, "the economic problems of our time have deep spiritual roots and are linked to culture and the meaning of life". Therefore, churches have a special role to play as they have a spiritual message for the people. This conclusion, however, still leaves many questions unanswered, such as: which values should be promoted and what exactly should be the role of the churches?

This last question provoked much debate. "Churches should not identify themselves with specific economic policies", warned Fr. Christopher Bender, a Greek Orthodox priest from the United States. Quoting Tolstoy, another participant said: "A shoemaker should make shoes, a baker should bake bread". Churches should not join social movements and should be above civil society. After all, the Church Fathers did not develop economic models; their truth is of another order. Besides, churches do not necessarily know all the right answers to the present problems.

All participants agreed however that it is one of the tasks of the churches to create space and a platform where social issues can be discussed. Here the role of the laity is of crucial importance. Just as the monastic movement was originally a lay movement and as they played an important role in the social and economic development of Russia, explained Prof. Vitaly Antonik, so the role of the laity in the Church is to follow this example. But at crucial moments in history, the Church herself should not hesitate to intervene publicly, according to Archpriest Vladimir Veriga, who referred to the story in 1 Samuel 21 in which David received the sacred bread from the temple because there was an emergency.

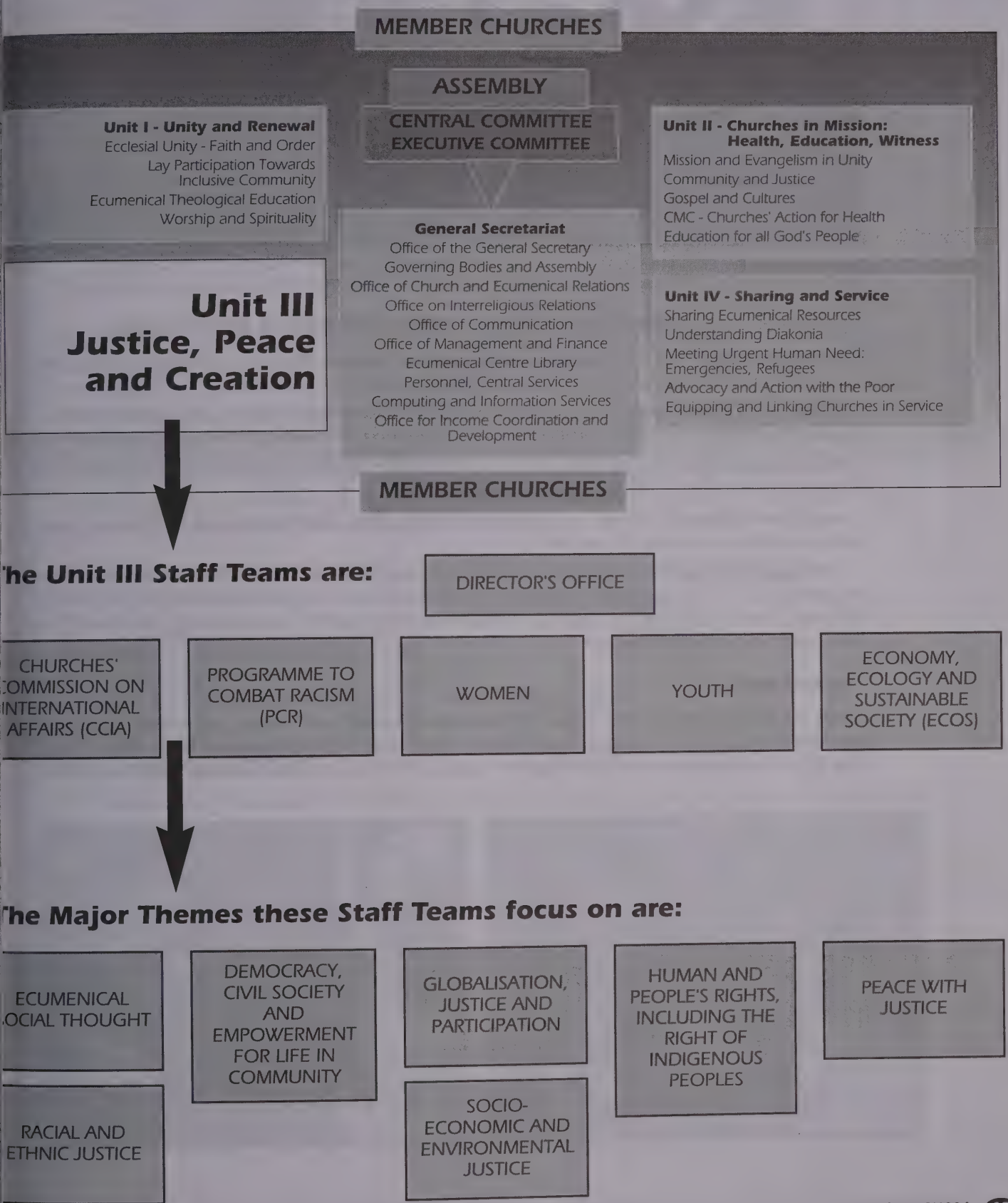
The priority in economic reform lies in the restoration of the moral value system in society.

The priority in economic reform lies in the restoration of the moral value system in society, said Prof. Gelvanovsky. It is in this sphere that the guarantee of social and political stability of Russia lies. Any positive development of the Russian economy is possible only if the healthy ethical framework of social relations is restored. Speaking as an Orthodox Christian, Prof. Gelvanovsky saw the role of the Russian Orthodox Church, as a dominant denomination in Russia, as decisive, for building an economy based on love. Christian economic education programmes should be developed which do only attempt to give clear answers to ethical problems in economic life, but could also lead to practical recommendations for management based on Christian principles.

The ten point programme adopted at the consultation will be elaborated at a future meeting between the WCC and the churches in Russia. Collaboration with other ecumenical organizations will be sought. Such collaboration is essential because, as Prof Gelvanovsky said: "We are united by common problems".

Rob van Drimmelen is Executive Secretary for Economy and Faith, Unit III of the WCC.

The place of Programme Unit III within the Structure of the World Council of Churches



catherine alt, wcc

From left to right: Rev. Charles Harper, Ms Béatrice Merahi, Ms Patricia Bruschweiler, Mr. Dwain Epps, Ms Elizabeth Salter, Mr. Clement John and Ms Christiane Hoeffel.

THE TEAM ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS (CCIA)

Mr Clement John, from Pakistan, executive secretary with special responsibility for human rights, and Ms Catherine Christ Taha, from the USA, administrative assistant.

Ms Elizabeth Salter, from the United Kingdom, executive secretary with special responsibility for peace concerns, and Ms Béatrice Merahi, from Switzerland, administrative assistant.

Rev. Dwain C. Epps, from the USA, executive secretary for International Affairs and Public Issues, and Ms Christiane Hoeffel, from France, administrative assistant.

Rev. Charles Harper, from the USA, consultant on human rights and impunity, and Ms Patricia Bruschweiler, from Peru, administrative assistant.

Ms Salpy Eskidjian succeeds Elizabeth Salter in January 1995. For the past four years coordinator of the justice, peace and human rights programme of the Middle East Council of Churches, she is Cypriot by nationality, and a member of the Armenian Orthodox Apostolic Church. Here with Catherine Christ-Taha (right on the left-hand photo below).

NEWCOMERS

Rev. Dr. Martin Robra, (right on the right-hand photo below) from Germany, executive secretary to be based in ECOS team with primary responsibility for the Theology of Life process; and Marise Pégat-Toquet from France, administrative assistant. They are replacing Wesley Granberg-Michaelson and Peony Wong.

catherine alt, wcc

PUBLICATIONS of INTEREST

COLUMBA! A cartoon history of Latin America

For many the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Americas was a time to celebrate adventure, development and progress. For others, 1992 was a time for reflection on the history of 500 years of contact between South America and Europe. It was a time to reflect on pain, injustice, human rights abuses and inequality.

This collection of cartoons, many from Latin America, is a contribution to such reflections. It aims to provide stimulus for debate and discussion on some of the key periods and issues of the past 500 years.
Columba! explores key dimensions in the history of Latin America and its links with the wider world through the work of various cartoonists. *Columba!* was specially commissioned and pays particular attention to the work of many well known Latin American cartoonists as well as those from North America and Europe.

Potatoe Press, 1993, £7.00

INTERMEDIATE TECHNOLOGY Publications 1994-95 Catalogue:

"The Cultural Dimension of Development: Indigenous Knowledge Systems"

D. Michael Warren, L. Jan Slikkerveer and David Brokensha

After nearly fifty years of international development, increasing attention is being paid to the potential of Indigenous knowledge, which is usually considered in relation to one particular domain — agriculture, forestry, health, veterinary science, etc. This volume includes forty-six papers, from a wide variety of disciplines including anthropology, sociology, geography, agricultural sciences and others. Contributors come from academia and from international organisations. There are twenty-seven case studies and six general conceptual papers.
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First published in 1994, by the Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (ISPCK), P.O. Box 1585, Kashmere Gate, Delhi, 110006, India, in association with the Ecumenical Theological Education, Unit on Unity and Renewal of the World Council of Churches, Geneva, Switzerland. ISBN: 81-7214-154-8, CC Rs. 75.00, HC Rs. 100.00

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First published in 1991 (second revised edition in 1994) by the ISPCK (see address above), for the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, P.O. Box 4600, 73 (17 old) Miller's Road, Bangalore-560046, India. ISBN: 81-7214-034-7, Rs 30 (India only), US$2.50.

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About the Author: The *Rev. Dr James Massey* is a Presbyter of the Church of North India and is currently the General Secretary/Director of the Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Delhi. He hails from Punjab. He has been awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by the Johann Wolfgang-Goethe University, Frankfurt, Germany. He is the translator of the Punjabi Bible (common language) and author of *Masihiata: Ika Paricaya* (Christianity: An Introduction) in Punjabi; *doctrine of Ultimate Reality in Sikh Religion* and *Christian Dalits in India* (Hindi). He has also edited several books, which include *Contextual Theological Education and, Indigenous People: Dalits - Dalit Issues in Today's theological Debate.* His articles have been published in academic books and journals.

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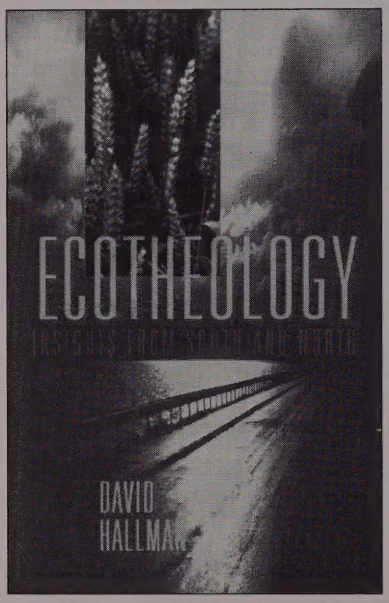

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